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The Boss Magazine

#87 SPRING 2008

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LETTERS

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

Dear Editor:

Matt Orel's story on the lineage/evolution of the Seeger Sessions should be placed in the *Backstreets* Hall of Fame as soon as possible. In my mind, stories like that not only clearly define the greatness of Bruce, they illustrate the essence of what makes *Backstreets* a superior publication. Keep up the good work!

Greg Cabana
via e-mail

Dear Editor:

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the latest issue of *Backstreets*. The trouble with finishing them so quickly is the long wait until the next one arrives!

I thoroughly enjoyed Roderick Jones' feature, "Rock 'n' Roll Taxidermy." I thought it was superb, and I am sure that any music fan will relate though his writing to the passion he has for his favorite band. Though I have some of their music in my collection and have watched some of their excellent performances on YouTube, I personally have never seen Marah in concert. That will be rectified when the band comes to the U.K. and I make the short trip over to Manchester to enjoy the show.

Gary Ashton
Huddersfield, U.K.

Dear Editor:

I have been a fan of *Backstreets* for years. My brother owned a store called The Last Straw in Bloomfield and Belmar NJ, and he sold the magazine from the behinning. I wanted to thank you for the article Bob Santelli wrote on my husband Bob Alfano. It made my daughter and I feel proud to read about all he did as a musician.

Bob was a great piano player, composer, and poet. I just wish he could share his talents with others for more years to come. He was a very humble man—I only wish he got the recognition he deserved.

Jacalyn Alfano
via e-mail

Dear Editor:

I have been a subscriber to *Backstreets* for 23 years. The quality of the magazine has improved year after year, and it's been great to watch the magazine evolve, what with the plethora of incredible writers and photographers throughout the years.

That's what makes the last three years so disappointing. The internet obviously has changed the way we receive our Bruce juice, and nobody is happier with Backstreets.com than me, but you owe it to your subscribers to put out a quality product in a timely fashion and with some consistency. It's a real shame that the magazine has become somewhat irrelevant, as issues covering the records and tours are coming out so long after the fact. True, we can get the reviews in basically real time on the website, but for me one of the charms of the magazine has been reading the fan reviews and *Backstreets*' take on the albums and tours when the latest issue of the magazine comes out.

Telling us you're working on the new issue and that it will be out soon is not good enough. Simply put, you can and must do better by your subscribers. The last three years have been unacceptable. I will continue to support the website and the magazine, but my days of subscribing are over.

Kirk J. Marley
via e-mail

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Dear Editor:

Every now and then all the elements come together for a perfect moment. We live, we work, and we toil away for those moments of bliss. I was fortunate to have one today.

This morning I took my car in to have a slow leak in one of the tires fixed. They called just before noon to say it was ready, and I walked to the shop to pick it up. I paid the tab, put down the top, and headed to Circuit City for the new Springsteen album.

Today was one of those glorious days here in the mountains; the sky was cloudless and blue, the air had just a hint of fall in it at night but warmed to the mid-

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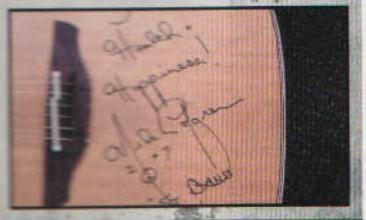

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70s in the daytime, the humidity was low. The circle of ridges ringing Asheville was sharp and vibrant on the horizon. I plunked down my $9.60, tore open the packaging, inserted *Magic* into the car's refurbished CD player, and held my breath; "Radio Nowhere" began.

Through seven stop lights I sat until I hit the interstate, I pushed replay and began the disc again. As the first track wound down for the second time, I exited onto the Blue Ridge Parkway and headed north. This time I let the album run its course.

For six songs I climbed, the air cooling as my elevation and exhilaration increased. I passed the overlooks, riding on a road with no traffic, no stoplights, and no worries, listening to the full, rich sound of the new disc. As "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" ended I reversed course, rolling back down the hill as the second "side" played.

Where the Parkway meets the interstate there is a church on a hill. It has been there for years. My friend Jake and I used to go backpacking in the mountains west of Asheville, long ago when we were in college. We'd pass this church on the way to the big hills, and were known to stop there occasionally on the way back, admiring the view from their parking lot. We'd relieve ourselves, roll a fat puppy, relax a bit, and then hit the road heading for home, refreshed.

After college, Jake and I tried to stay in touch. He was an usher in my wedding in 1980, and we went on a few more backpacking trips together, but eventually time and distance eroded away our friendship. A few years ago I decided to look Jake up online. I found him; I found his obituary.

"Devil's Arcade" was playing as I exited the Parkway today, and just as "Terry's Song" began I was about to pass the entrance to the little church. I turned the wheel hard and pulled up the drive into the same lot where Jake and I stopped. I sat in the car where Jake and I used to sit, admiring the view of the mountains ringing the city, listening to Bruce's elegy for his friend.

The top was down, the sun was shining, the music played. As Bruce sang I had time to reflect on love and friendship, and life and death. It was one of those moments in life where seemingly random events come together in a perfect instant.

Indeed, I thought, when they built you, brother, they broke the mold.

Douglas W. Corkhill
Asheville, NC

FLYING

Dear Editor:

I just received the new album—the actual *album*—in the mail, and to say "you made my day" would be an understatement! I ran down to the basement to crank up the old record player and let the music and the magic wash over me as I read the lyrics from the beautiful jacket cover. It brought back that wonderful feeling from 26 years ago when I went down to the basement to listen to the first Bruce album I bought, *Greetings*. I was so blown away that night. It was an epiphany, a lasting connection. It was like... magic.

That was when I was 14, in my parents' basement. I'm now 41, and both my parents are gone; my mother died just over a month ago. I've been a nervous wreck lately, the cracks are starting to show through my facade of holding it together.

One thing that's held true for me, that I could always count on for 26 years, has been my faith in Bruce's music to never let me down, or disappoint me. I need his songwriting brilliance now more than ever to get me through all I've had to deal with this year, and once again he comes through with *Magic!*

Cindy Wolfe
via e-mail

ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Dear Editor:

People always wonder what they would say to Bruce if they had the opportunity to meet him. I've never been able to answer that question, because there's so much I would want to say. Those who are not fans cannot possibly understand the effect he has on our daily lives, whether it be anticipation for an upcoming record and tour, a classic song that we've recently connected with, or simply something to get us through a rough day. I often wonder what my life would be like today had I not, on a whim, gone to that concert at Vet Stadium on a blazing hot August night in 1985. I just can't imagine it.

But after the release of *Magic*, I now know what I would say to Bruce. This record is brilliant, poetic, thought-provoking. All of his records are, but this one hits home for me and I don't know why. I don't have family or friends who are serving in Iraq. In fact, my only personal connection is my and my husband's fear that our sons, even our daughter, could be called on one day to fight in this senseless and brutal "mistake." For those who have or have had loved ones there, I can only imagine how poignant this record must be to them.

I'm amazed at how Bruce can say so much with so few words. "Gypsy Biker" is a novel in three paragraphs. You can hear the heartbreak in the voice of the storyteller, you can smell the gasoline burning and feel the high desert wind. The desperation, regret, and sadness of the soldier in "Devil's Arcade" is palpable. It is my personal opinion that lyrically, it is the greatest song Bruce has ever written.

What surprises me most is that after nearly 40 years, the new releases have the capacity to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the classics. I admire Bruce's courage, his beliefs, his conviction. Music has never had such a powerful effect on me as this has.

So, if I ever had the chance to meet Bruce, I would say to him, "Thank you." Because that is all I really want to say.

Maria Macaluso
Deptford, NJ

DANCE TO A SONG

Dear Editor:

Correction to John Howie Jr. and all those other people who think the instruments that Soozie Tyrell and Sam Bardfield are playing are violins.

They're fiddles! Fiddles, fiddles, fiddles. Not violins. If you're listening to a string quartet, you're listening to violins. If you're listening to music like the Sessions Band or bluegrass or zydeco, those guys are playing fiddles.

There's really no difference in the construction of a fiddle and a violin. The difference is in the attitude and style of the musician. Some people differentiate them this way: A violin sings, and a fiddle dances!

Let's have no more violins in *Backstreets*.

Nancy S. Bishop
Chicago, IL

Fair point. But with both the We Shall Overcome *and* Live in Dublin *liner notes crediting the instrument as a violin, I decided to take the albums' word for it. —JHJ*

THE FOOL ON THE HILL

Dear Editor:

After learning about the new Springsteen interview in *Rolling Stone*—a *cover* story, cool!—I rushed to get an issue when it came out here in my new homeland, Australia. I was thinking that Bruce just might be one of the few singer/songwriters to make the cover so often, when I ran across the Oz-flavored issue. A humbling experience for Mr. Springsteen, since he took backseat to a guy dressed in drag!

D.T. Shindler
via e-mail

YOU SAY STOP, I SAY GO

Dear Editor:

I just read about [longtime Jersey Shore bassist] John Luraschi's illness—it's very distressing, and I wanted to pass a quick story on to you.

John did me one of the biggest favors I ever received in my life, and he doesn't know it. When I was playing in bands in Asbury, around the days I was in Krackit (with Mike Scialfa) and The Shots, John was playing in "Hot Romance." I was about 20, had some songs that I thought were

Continued on page 114

Danny Federici, 1950 - 2008

Exit Music

By Robert Beverly

GUY ACETO PHOTO

April 18, 2007

I walked out the front door with my dog this morning, with the busiest workday of the month ahead. Sunny and not too chilly—pleasant enough. But then the first two songs out of the day's dogwalk shuffle were "Heart-Shaped Box" and "Exit Music (For a Film)," and I thought, *Hmm, that's an interesting start.* Then the iPod proceeded to another Radiohead song, "Lucky," where ironically, the unit froze, paused, and then shut down, impervious to reset. At that point, iPod possibly dead, I felt like I had a grip on the nature of the morning.

I was wrong—although I later resuscitated the unit, I wish I could've ponied up for a new iPod and called it a day. Online, after replying to a couple of e-mails, I read the news that Danny Federici had died.

Danny had taken a leave of absence from the *Magic* tour at the end of last year's U.S. leg, so he could receive treatment for melanoma. He returned to the E Street fold for eight songs at their Indianapolis show last month, but what many took as an encouraging sign was likely, in retrospect, an effort to give him a last moment to bask in the adulation of his fans and the love of his bandmates at the end of a full but sadly truncated career.

What a career it was. As Springsteen notes on his site, the two Jersey kids grew up together: they met and started playing together when they were 18, going through a few different bands before the E Street lineup came together. They went from swimming pool and tiny club gigs to piling in a van and playing the circuit. And by the time they hit 30, they were playing arenas in Europe, and then stadiums in America. A true rags-to-riches story, spanning almost exactly 40 years.

The band has swapped out and accumulated members over the years; even the "new guys," Nils Lofgren and Patti Scialfa, joined the band nearly a quarter-century ago. Still, it's worth remembering that Federici was one of only three current members (with Garry Tallent and Clarence Clemons) who had been with Bruce in the original lineup.

In the early days, the band was funkier, and jazz/rock pro David Sancious handled duties on piano. During the making of *Born to Run*, Sancious' departure led to the arrival of Roy Bittan, who had been working in a Broadway pit. Federici and Sancious had sounded good together, but the Federici/Bittan axis created a much more distinct contrast in styles, in turn forming a core component of what would become the familiar E Street sound.

As what you could call an intermediate-level pianist, I admire individual playing in two ways. The first way is because I more or less understand what the player is doing; his basic sensibility is similar to mine, and he is really, really good at what he does. That's Roy Bittan—technically awesome, not without feeling by any means, but with a more structured, classically influenced approach.

I admire other playing precisely because I have no idea how the guy is doing it. I hear it, and I can't get my head around what's going through his brain, which is perplexing, mystifying, and a little enchanting. That's what Danny's playing could be like. He had a vocabulary full of grace notes and melodic fills, and a bag of tricks pertaining to playing the organ as opposed to the piano, that made for great performance, not even counting his solos.

While it's amazing how many of his real signature parts he had recorded before he was 25, it's more impressive to realize how much musical knowledge he had absorbed before he ever met Springsteen. Yeah, he knew classical, too, but he had a variety of ethnic and regional riffery down cold, stemming in part from his accordion education. Add a genuine desire to rock, stir in the willingness to make music your life, don't forget the luck of having a world-class rock star-in-waiting growing up in your neighborhood, and you have something special.

Federici by all accounts was a humble guy, and that carried over to his role in the band. Bittan and his parts were often higher profile; on top of that, Roy was further downstage, better lit, literally more visible. I listened to nothing but the E Street Band today—post-iPod crash—and there was even one passage in "Saint in the City" where I thought *gosh, Danny isn't even playing right now.* Then I realized he *was* playing—there was so much going on elsewhere that he was somehow creating less notes than texture, finding his space and contributing to what the listener enjoyed almost subliminally.

More noticeable was his glockenspiel work. Listen to a stripped-down live version of "Thunder Road," and the instrumental star is the piano. But what provides the unmistakable E Street stamp is the glockenspiel in the supporting role. Its sound, part Swiss watch and part bell, is what joins the vocal and brings the song

to life. That is the sound of the wind chimes on the porch as Mary walks past them to get in the car. And that is the sound of the lightning-struck feeling in the air (and in their stomachs) as the two kids drive off.

Any decent Danny Federici clip reel, even above high-profile parts like "Rosalita" or the "Detroit Medley," contains three songs. "Sandy" is as evocative as it is because Federici can put into notes the Jersey Shore atmosphere that Springsteen put into words. It's hard to name another rock song where a single instrument creates such a sense of place. "Kitty's Back" is also prime Federici, featuring one and sometimes two extended jazzy excursions for the organist to take the spotlight for a couple of minutes. Springsteen dusted off this gem lately on the *Magic* tour, and the rare encore duo of "Growin' Up" and "Kitty's Back" that we saw last Veteran's Day in DC will remain an all-time concert moment for me.

But at the top of the top, there is nearly any live version of "Racing in the Street" (see the *Live/1975-85* box set). The story is stark. The "ending" is not happy. The lyric and vocal are beautiful only for the way they tell the story and cling to realism over a fairytale ending. If the song ended where the vocal ends, it would be a very good song.

However, what follows is a few minutes of rock ensemble perfection. In the lyric, racing in the street goes from being an act of teenage bravado to an adult act of escaping from an unanticipated life. The song's instrumental passage combines the romance of the character's youth with the knowledge that those days and possibilities are gone—this familiar habit the sole refuge that bridges those very different times.

When the purpose behind the habit has fully evolved, the lyric has nothing to do but end, leaving music to express things that only music can express. It's no place for solos—everyone contributes with taste to create a cinematic tableau equaled in majesty (but not emotion) only by "Jungleland" and perhaps "Incident on 57th Street" in the Springsteen catalog.

In that passage, as many fans have articulated before me, the Federici/Bittan partnership reaches its arguable peak. While Federici's playing was often the earthier of the two, here the piano is closer to the ground. It is stately but carrying things along, generating the comfort the character must have felt in the seat of that car, appreciating a fine-tuned engine in action as only a car guy can.

The organ, on the other hand, sounds like the overhead sky, a melancholy figure sitting above the piano's machinations. Calm, nothing moving too swiftly, it is the sound of open space, gilded by a few details. It's the part where past and present coalesce in a solitary late summer evening, with the sweet night air rushing past like the years.

To me, that's the one part of an E Street Band show that will never feel the same. Not because Charlie Giordano isn't quite capable or because the playing involved any great dexterity from Federici, but because those three minutes felt like those particular musicians from a common background, for an instant playing almost completely for themselves in front of thousands of people.

It felt like those guys sharing a collective moment that necessarily has to change when the group changes. The picture they paint will change, too, if just a little. In real life, the sky is the least essential element of driving from Point A to Point B at dusk, but we keep looking up at it, don't we? It's the distinctive piece of my favorite part of the day, and that particular part was Danny's.

Danny Federici died on the afternoon of April 17, 2008. We stopped the presses on this issue in order to mark his passing. Thanks to fellow traveler Robert Beverly, for showing up just as I threw my original, no-longer-significant editorial on the scrap heap. That leg-up is yet just another reminder to me of the strength of this fan community—all of us, now grieving together for Brother Dan. And I know this community joins me in extending our greatest sympathies to those closest to Danny, who loved him, who grew up with him, who made beautiful music with him. You'll find some of many of those voices represented in our tribute to Danny, coming in the next issue of Backstreets. *—C.P.*

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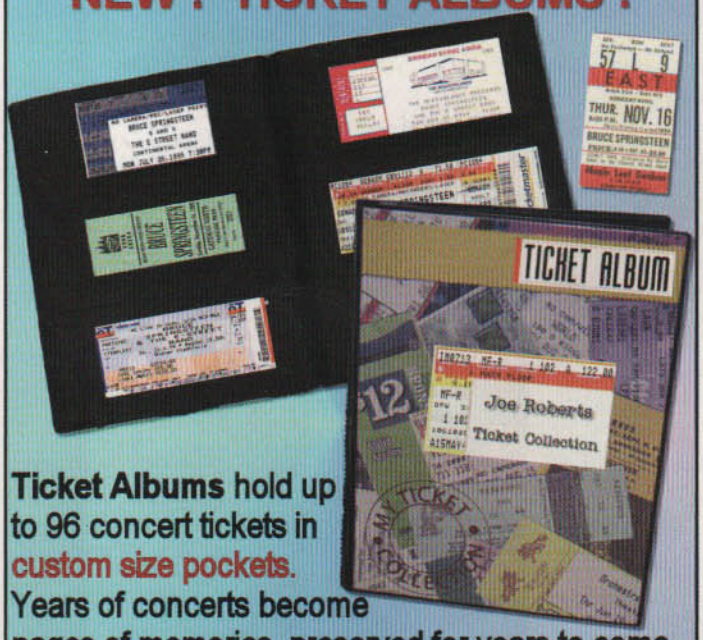

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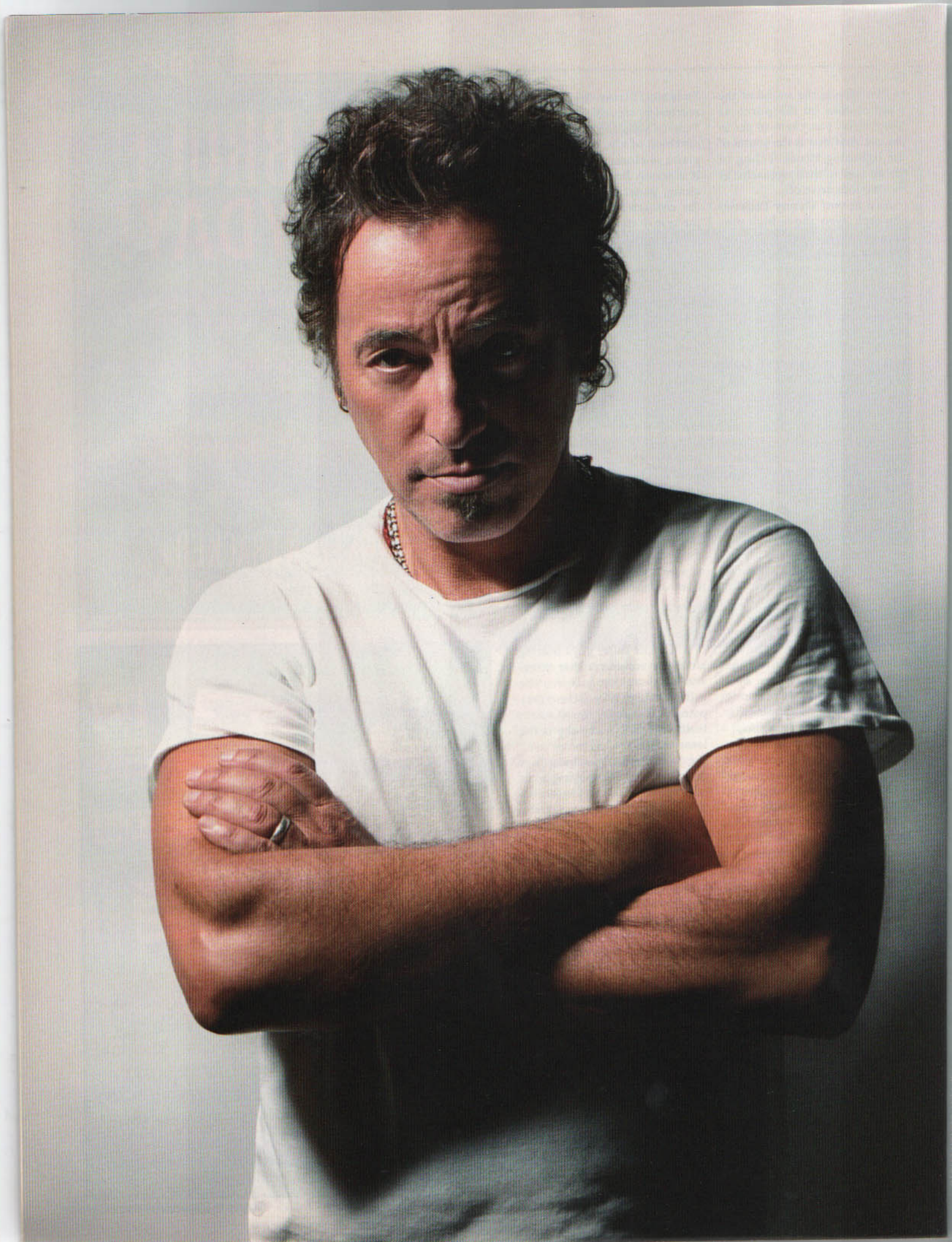


Trust None of What You Hear

musings on MAGIC

by erik flannigan

AS OBVIOUS AS IT MAY BE TO DESCRIBE *Magic* as the latest album by Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, that is something very welcome indeed. By which I mean *Magic* carries with it no additional caveat or condition that demarcates the record as something separate or apart from the rest of Springsteen's body of work.

It is not a reaction, like *The Rising*, to a once-in-a-generation event. It is not a reunion project. It's not a solo album, overdubbed with band appearances, even though it wasn't recorded in the manner of, say, *The River*. One could argue that until *Magic*, we have to go all the way back to *Born in the U.S.A.* for the last regular ol' album with the E Streeters.

No wonder, then, that *Magic* offers a narrative continuation to *Born in the U.S.A.* and the albums that preceded it. It also sounds like the work of the musicians who made *Born to Run* and *The River*, though not, happily, in an overtly retro way (thanks in part to the production, which embraces the sonic connection between this present work and Springsteen's past without trying to literally recreate the latter).

Another connection to what one might call (if only for alliteration's sake) the core of the canon is length. Magic runs 47:48—a full 25 minutes less than *The Rising*. Is shorter inherently better? It seems audacious to say yes, but it does feel at least mathematically sound to assert that fewer songs inherently make it a more focused work than *The Rising*.

-continued-

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

B-sides once afforded Springsteen the opportunity to add additional chapters to some stories ("Shut Out the Light") or to explore musical veins that, at the time, felt somehow apart from the rest of the associated album (e.g. "Be True," "Janey, Don't You Lose Heart"). Without the B-side, those additional songs wind up either overloading an album (again, *The Rising*) or going altogether unheard. Intriguingly for the *Magic* sessions was word out of the post-release interviews with Brenden O'Brien that something on the order of another full album's worth of material was recorded and could see release in the future. Fingers crossed.

By now we know *Magic* is Springsteen's most positively reviewed album in quite some time, with five stars (*Rolling Stone, MOJO*) and A grades (*Entertainment Weekly*) all around. Given that, what might be in order is an exploration of some of the themes those pieces raised and fans discussed with the release of the album.

Glock and Load

Many songs on *Magic* return to the styles and arrangements found on previous Springsteen albums, managing to sound fresh and familiar at the same time. And while it can't be quantified or measured, there is no debate that *Magic* is his catchiest batch of songs in ages.

Some feel specifically tied to particular eras: "Livin' in the Future" and "Last to Die" could come straight outta the *River* sessions; "You'll Be Comin' Down," a *Born in the U.S.A.* outtake; "Your Own Worst Enemy" channels "None But the Brave," while the layers of vocal harmony in the bridge nod to "Tunnel of Love"; "Devil's Arcade" and the vocal of "Magic" slot right onto *Devils & Dust*.

Writing for *Backstreets* long before *Tracks* was released, I noted how Springsteen seemed to have an aversion to releasing mid-tempo rockers and love songs like "Rendezvous," "Cindy," and "Cynthia" as these often wound up as outtakes. "I'll Work For Your Love" is an unabashed kindred spirit to all of them and a welcome inclusion on *Magic*.

Not Homework

"It's not homework" was the succinct reaction a friend gave after his first listen to *Magic*. I think most of us know what he means: that particular professorial bent found in some of Springsteen's narratives on *Devils & Dust*, *The Rising*, even going back to *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. More research than soul search. Listen to this—its good for you.

"Not homework" is a testament to the immediacy and catchiness of songs like "Radio Nowhere," "I'll Work for Your Love," and "You'll Be Comin' Down." Which isn't to say *Magic* lacks heady themes. Life, love and war are all there, they just reveal themselves less overtly and leave room for personal interpretation.

If anything, reviewers may have gone too far tying the album's lyrics so completely to the war and current administration, ignoring by and large the relationship record that's also in the grooves (aren't those wedding bells at the end of "Your Own Worst Enemy"?). *Magic* is wide awake and aware that it's 2007, both for Springsteen the man and Springsteen the citizen, but it is not a purely didactic indictment of the state of the State in 2007. At least, I believe that's a distinction to be made.

Homage

Seeing Springsteen let his inner Beach Boy shine through Phil Spector on "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" and the start of "Your Own Worst Enemy" is one of *Magic*'s real charms. The controlled vocal performances of both are among his best, and the grandeur of the arrangements gives the songs emotional heft.

Curiously, the blogosphere skipped quickly past Wilson and Spector to suggest "Your Own Worst Enemy" and "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" sound an awful lot like Magnetic Fields (and specifically the song "Born on a Train"). Once made, this comparison started popping up everywhere, including the *New York Times*.

Even as a fan of Stephen Merritt (who records as Magnetic Fields), I found the connection somewhat implausible. Merritt's monotone is more a limitation than a choice, and the low-fi nature of his recordings stand in stark contrast to the elaborate arrangements and lushness of both *Magic* songs.

New York magazine even went so far as to imply Springsteen knew "Born on a Train" from Arcade Fire's one-off cover version of it

performed on KCRW a couple of years ago. Apparently when he's not on tour, Bruce is bittorrenting like the rest of us. I wonder what his ratio is?

Livin' in the Past

Unlike *The Rising* or *Devils & Dust*, *Magic* feels like the latest chapter in the narrative of characters whose stories Springsteen started in the '70s and '80s (okay, maybe not Shaniqua). When Springsteen sings in "Gypsy Biker" that "we pulled your cycle out of the garage and polished up the chrome," he is overtly tying this war veteran to the one in "Shut Out the Light" whose car "Bobby pulled out of the garage and polished up the chrome." Only this time he never makes it home.

But it's a thin line between revisiting and retreading. While a return to established musical motifs serves many *Magic* songs well, "Long Walk Home" proves more confounding. Similar to "Gypsy Biker," the story of "Long Walk Home" ties directly back to *Born in the U.S.A.* and specifically "My Hometown," right down to the streets, shuttered storefronts, and fatherly advice, this time most notably about Old Glory and what she represents. I suspect I'm alone on this, but for me the what-America-stands-for sentiment seems grafted onto this story, more a movie moment than a memory.

And with music that sounds too close for comfort like "Land of Home and Dreams" and its antecedents, along with one too many *darlings* (the only "G" to survive contraction on the entire album), "Long Walk Home" winds up a crafted set dénouement for me, not an anthemic masterpiece. There's familiar, then there's over-familiar.

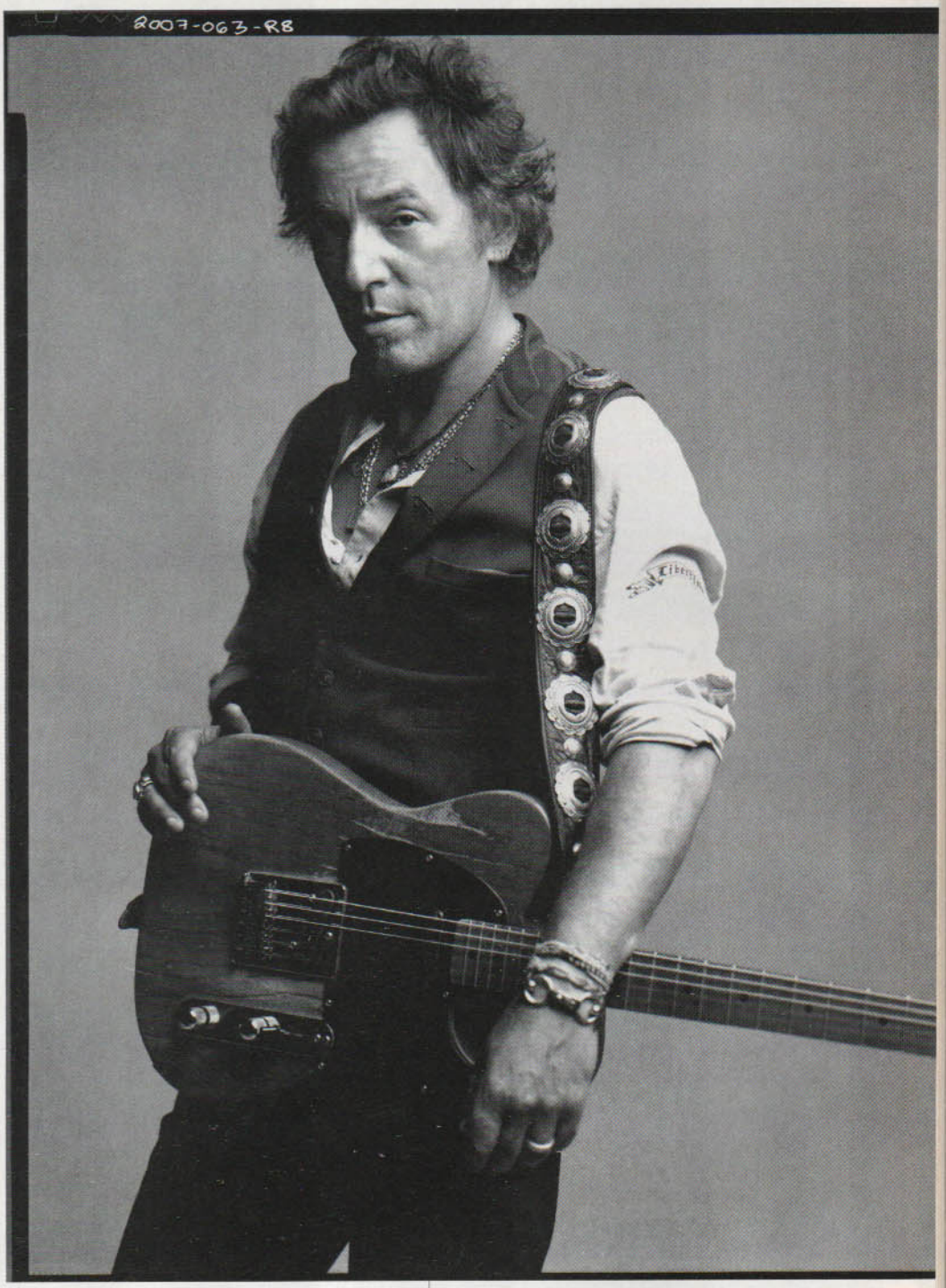
Together Alone

Is the *Greatest Hits* session the last time the entire band recorded together in the same room? Is something special lost when the band can't see each other but instead adds their parts to the record individually in overdub sessions? You'd think so, but try as I might to hear any impact from the overdub vs. live approach on this album, I can't find it.

Springsteen himself is credited with lead vocal, guitars, pump organ, harmonica, synth keyboard, glockenspiel, percussion and backing vocals. The *Devils & Dust* tour paying dividends.

Compression

It didn't take long for the gripers to begin calling for O'Brien's ouster, complaining about the production of *Magic*. It's "too compressed," said one Internet posting, presuming to know what that means. O'Brien also mixed the record, so he does play a significant role in the sound of the album through those mix decisions. But the final soundscape of *Magic* is, put simply, a combination of song arrangements, mix, and mastering, the latter handled by the camp's longtime "ears," Bob Ludwig. Springsteen may not be pushing faders or turning knobs, but he's the biggest influencer in all three phases. Brendan O'Brien didn't make it sound this way. Bruce did. Or maybe it's your headphones or speakers and you've forgotten that MP3 files only have ten percent the data of a full CD audio track.



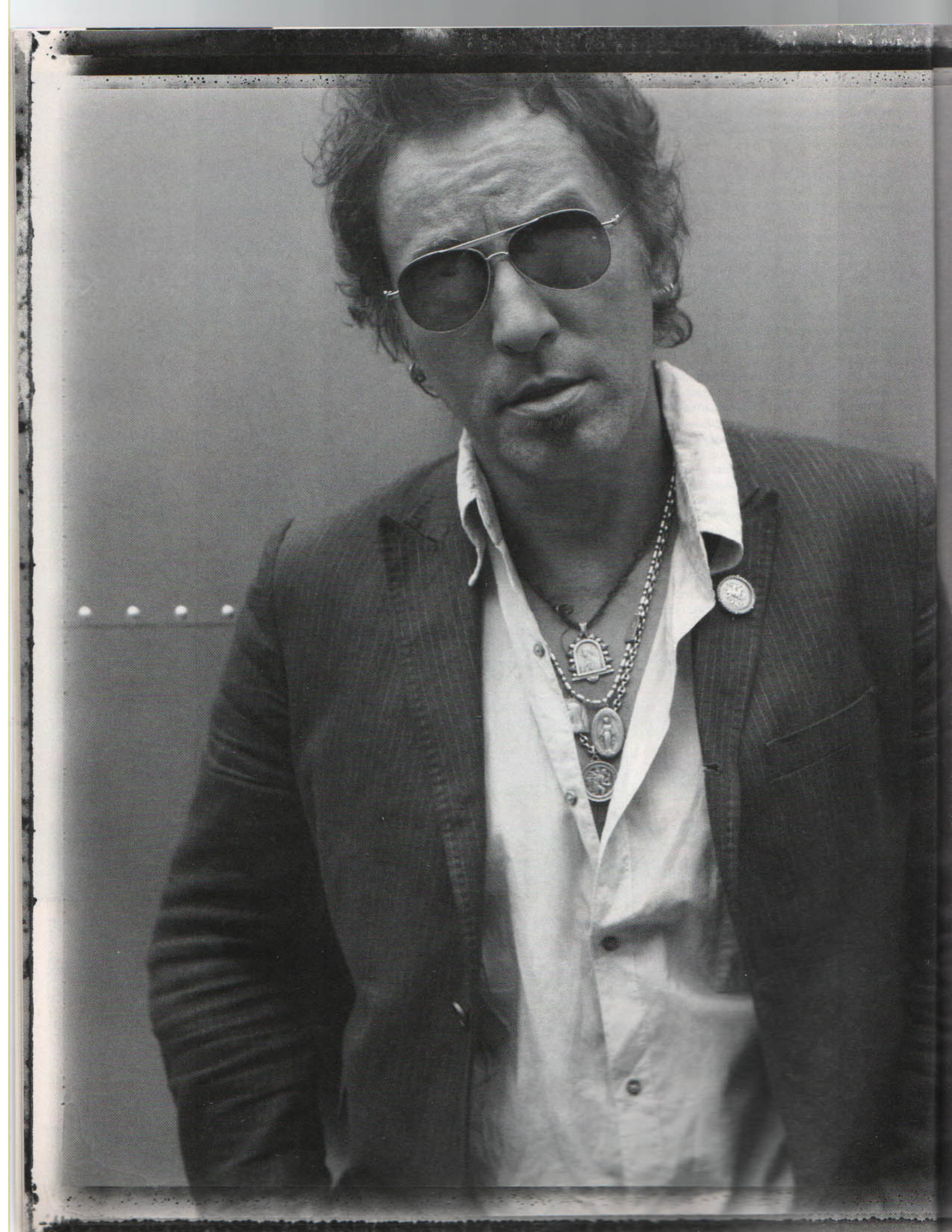
MARK SELIGER PHOTO

CD Packaging

There have also been quibbles about the cardboard CD packaging of *Magic*. Perhaps the quick turnaround between album completion and release contributed to its physical limitations. Admittedly, getting the disc and booklet out is a pain in the ass, and other than the extremely glossy paper stock, there ain't much to write home about. Well, get used to it. The deluxe packaging of *The Rising* or *Devils & Dust* didn't provide a sales lift, and as more and more of us are buying downloads anyway, or ripping our CDs and only playing the MP3s thereafter, the days of tactile delights are numbered.

Me and Terry Became Friends

"Terry's Song," Springsteen's uncredited tribute to his late friend and partner-in-crime, Terry Magovern, brings *Magic* to an elegiac close. It's another moment of the E Street Band sounding brilliantly like the E Street Band should. The sentiment and performance speak for themselves, and most impressively, a cliché we've all heard a million times before feels like it was written just for him.



This is What Will Be

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN PREPARES TO TAKE FLIGHT FOR THE MAGIC TOUR

Interview by Christopher Phillips

ON AUGUST 24, 2007, GEARING UP TO RECONVENE THE E STREET BAND FOR REHEARSALS – A MONTH IN ADVANCE OF THE BAND'S FIRST CONCERT OF THE YEAR, A REHEARSAL SHOW IN ASBURY PARK – SPRINGSTEEN SPOKE EXCLUSIVELY WITH *BACKSTREETS* TO TALK TOUR.

***Backstreets:* So—the E Street Band is back!**

Springsteen: Yeah—it's pretty exciting. We've been having fun.

Gearing up for the tour now, how much of a vision do you have in advance? When you go in to rehearse, do you have things planned out in your head?

No, I don't, really. What do we do—we kind of pick up a little bit where we left off. First of all, we start playing just to feel the machine again *[laughs]*. You've gotta drive it a little bit before you push the envelope on it.

So you take a few laps.

Yeah. You know, we'll get in, and we may run through a few things we know, just to reacquaint ourselves with the sound and the power of the band. How it moves underneath you, and everything. That's sort of the first thing I do, is I refit myself into that bucket seat, you know? *"Oh* yeah, okay, now I remember...." And that takes all of about 15 minutes.

And then you just start. I'll probably go in with a general idea: maybe I'll have a general list of some songs I know I want to play, maybe there will be some things I'm not thinking of playing. But we leave the door very open, because over the course of a long tour, we end up playing so many songs... I don't know, I think there were 120 or something we played on the last tour? *[149! —Ed.]* So it's a very open door.

I think the initial thing you try to do is, you try to place your new work, to find a

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

Going public: fans' first taste of Magic, at Asbury Park's Convention Hall, September 24, 2007.

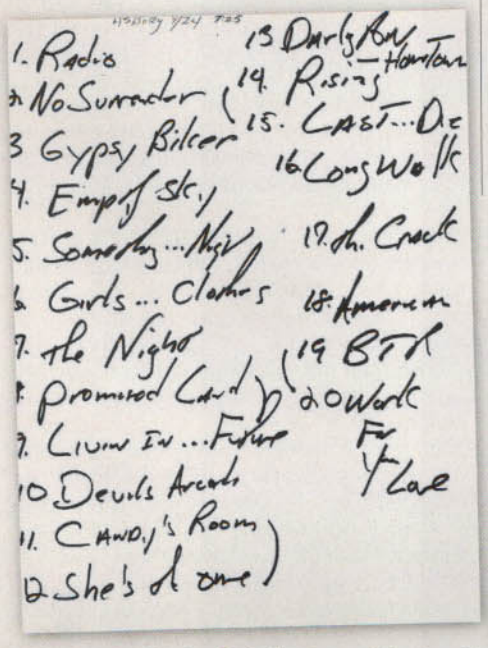
MARK R. SULLIVAN PHOTO

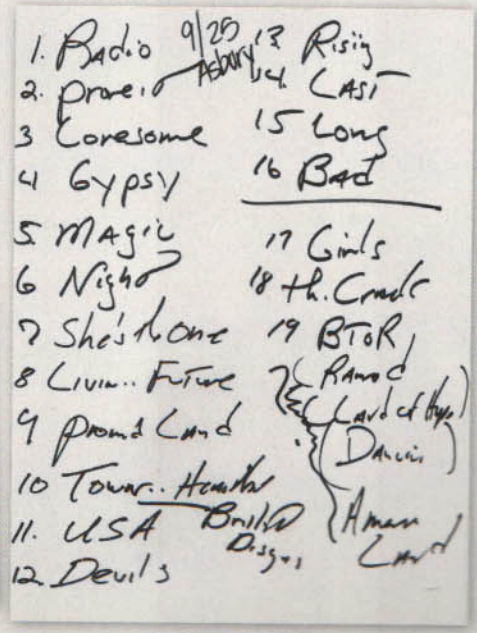
place for a lot of your new work. Obviously, you're excited about that. I'm excited about it. We have some stuff—not *some* stuff, we've got a *record* that's gonna play really great live. It's just built for it. I wrote with a lot of melody, and with a lot of hooks, and there's a lot of band power behind the stuff that I wrote this time out. So I'm excited to hear that come straight off the band.

I'll begin by just starting to play some things, and once you get comfortable with the playing of them, then you search for their context. You start making connections between the songs you have from your past work and some of the new songs. You're in search of *the show*. So once we start playing the things really well, then we go in search of how we're going to present it this time out. You go searching for the show: what collection of songs, what's feeling right, the balance between [old and new].

THE E STREET BAND IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE I REALLY DO THIS THING THAT I SUPPOSE I'M MOST KNOWN FOR, WHICH IS... IT'S A PEAK EXPERIENCE.

I like to play a lot of new stuff. We played a lot of *The Rising* on the [2002-2003] tour, that was pretty consistent. Because once again, it was stuff that just played really well live. We've got that again in spades on this record.





"Searching for the show": the first two setlists, from the warm-up shows in Asbury Park, NJ.

And would you say it's wall-to-wall that way? I remember on the *Rising* tour, there were a few songs like "Paradise" that took a while to come out. Do you think this whole record is going to play pretty initially?

There are always the things that draw you in more than come out and grab you, I suppose, I always have some of that. And then you've got to see what people respond to. I have a *good* idea, but it's still a conversation with your audience. And when they start listening, and talking back, then different things come to the front.

And that's one thing that's been pretty consistent with your tours over the years, is that you seem to come out with something in mind, and there's always the evolution that occurs as you continue.

Yeah, we'll come up with a show, and we may play that pretty steadily for the first series of gigs, because we're getting our feet underneath us. And then somewhere along the way, things start to loosen up—it's a pretty natural progression. Until we get to the end, where it gets... I still try to keep a

schematic that remains centered around our newest material, but also you start to open up to your whole body of work. And that's always fun to do, too.

On the last few tours, at a certain point a lot of the experience really became about the songbook—I was thrilled on the *Devils & Dust* tour when you wound up playing every song from *Tunnel of Love,* and I think a lot of other people were, too. Were there some discoveries there that you think you'll bring to this tour?

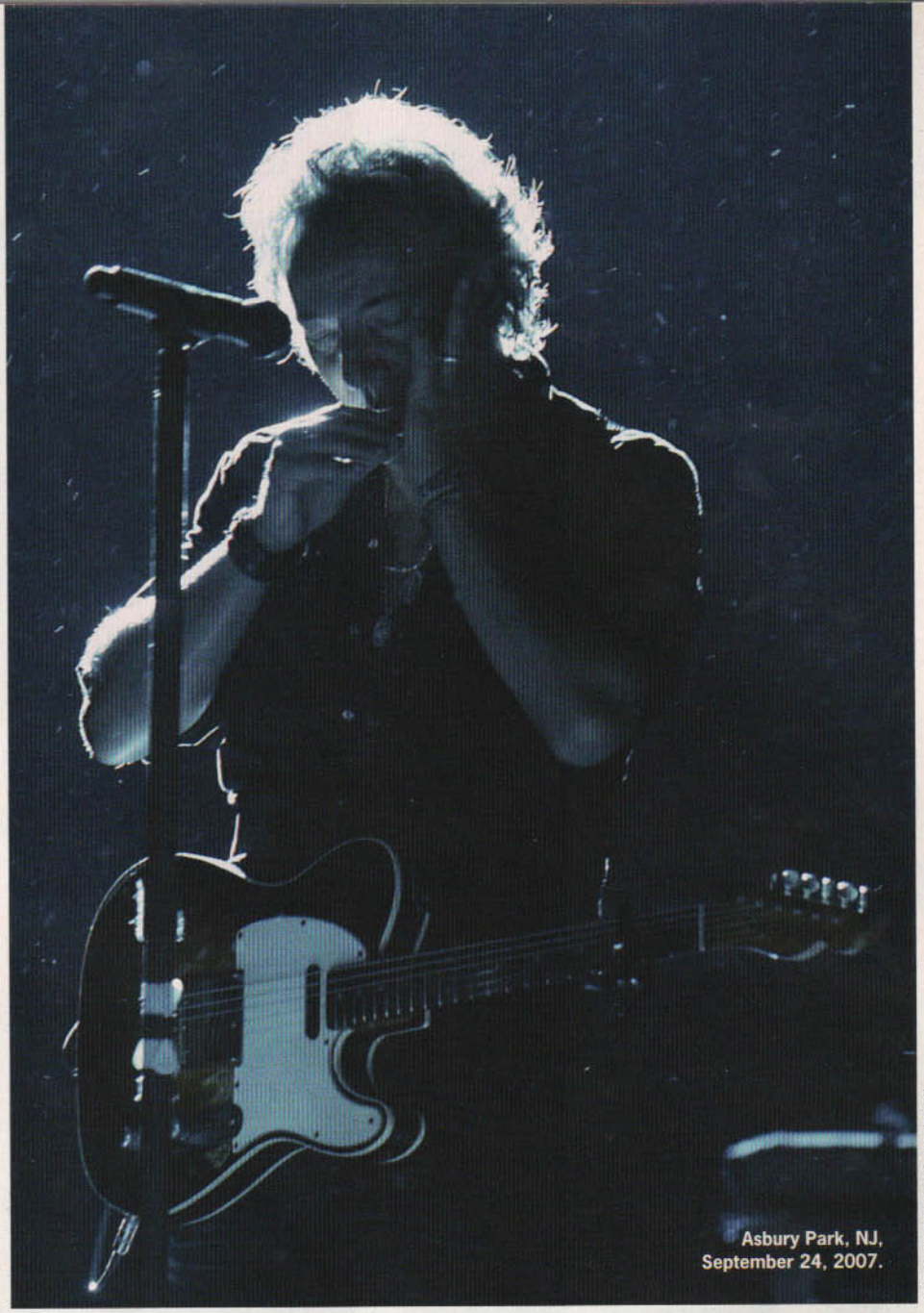
That *Tunnel of Love* record had a lot of good songs on it! *[Laughs]* And I think we only touched on it on the *Rising* tour. Toward the end of it, we started to play "Tunnel of Love" and some other things from it—I remember it was fun bringing some of that stuff back. But it's hard to say until we get into it. I don't know, I don't like to go in with any rigid ideas; these days I try to remain as fluid as possible. I'm interested in seeing where the music is going to take us, and where the band feels best. And that shifts slightly as the tour goes on, and obviously we try to make the shows unique, and it all falls into place. But I've got a lot of songs, obviously, that I'm carrying around at this point, and it's fun to get to them as the tour passes.

I think back to '88, when you came out on the *Tunnel* tour and kind of chucked a lot of the stuff that had become rote. And since then, you've tended to start off some tours with some resolutions, like "We're not playing Rosalita," or on *Devils & Dust,* "I won't be playing Thunder Road." Anything on your mind that you're *not* going to play this time?

It depends on what feels right. I mean, those are songs I'm sure we're not going to be playing every night. But I wouldn't go into the tour saying I'm never going to play anything at this particular point. I mean, stuff comes up, and if something feels right for a stretch of shows... we played "Rosalita" over that last piece of the *Rising* tour, we played it during the summer. And that was fun, bringing that back. It's fun to bring it back, but the band is currently making too much good music to sort of lock yourself into anything. And particularly something that... yeah, it's got some miles on it! *[Laughs]* A lot of those songs, they have some miles on them, so I tend to treat them like that: Like, "Oh, no, this thing has *served its purpose* and done it's job *well.*" So it's a horse I'll call in every once in a while.

Well, one horse you haven't called in for a while is "The Price You Pay"—I know a lot of people have been hoping to hear that one.

Yeah, I have no idea why—it's become a thing just because I *haven't* played it. If I had played it, nobody would give much of a damn if they heard it or not! *[Laughs]* Just because it *hasn't been played.*



Asbury Park, NJ, September 24, 2007.

MARK R. SULLIVAN PHOTO

So you kind of keep that going, don't you?

Well, you start to get into that thing, which I don't like very much, like: "Oh, man, I'm gonna be there the night..." you know, "I was there the night he played..." *[laughs].* I don't run by those rules very much. If I haven't played something, it's usually because I don't *want* to.

But no particular reason for not bringing that one back?

No specific reason—I'm sure if you searched the catalog, maybe there's other things that we haven't played, too. You know, my recollection is that it's been a while since we've played "Crush on You" *[laughs].* And I'm not sure that one's going to be popping up in the set any time soon, either, you know?

Your last two tours were about as far removed from E Street as you could get. One thing you said about the Sessions tour was, "During the course of the evening we play all the music that *leads* to rock music, but we don't play rock music."

Yeah—I'll be playing the *rock music* this time. In case anybody's wondering!

Once you get in that mode of performing in a whole new way, as you did on those last two tours, is it difficult to come back to the Band setting at all?

You usually think it will be when you're in it, because you're *so* in it—it's like everything else, for it to be really great, you've got to be 100 percent committed at that moment. So when you're in it, that's all there is. And I think that's what it takes to be really good. So I'll just lose myself in whatever form I'm working in at any given moment. And the other things seem distant: "Oh yeah, I like to do that too, and I like to do that too...."

But really, I'm very comfortable moving between all the different formats that I play in now. And I love them all, and I plan to continue doing them all—or variations thereof—in one form or another. I enjoy making acoustic records and writing those sorts of story songs; the Sessions Band was a tremendous discovery, and just such an amazing group of musicians that—I mean, those are some of the best shows that I feel that I've put on. So that was really just a great discovery, and it's something I look forward to finding another outlet for at some point.

And then the Band is *the Band,* you know? It's fabulous, and it's the only place where I really do the thing that I suppose that I'm most known for, which is... it's a *peak experience.* And so it's very easy—I enjoy doing them all, and I'll probably continue doing so.

You know, I always have a variety of records in the works. I wrote most of this E Street Band record while I was touring with the Sessions Band. So it's not hard for me. I'll go home and just—*boop!*—and I'll switch over. And I've probably written some story songs already for *that* type of record. I'll be working one thing, and when I go home at night sometimes I'll already be slipping into another way of writing and performing. At this point, what I do enjoy is playing regularly and getting a good amount of music out to my audience. Which is really something that, in my early years, I had a difficult time doing.

And you've really managed to do it—it's amazing, you've toured more in the last five years than you have since the late '70s.

Well, it was a promise I sort of made to myself a decade or more ago. I just wanted to be more productive. And luckily—you have your muses, you're always dependent upon your muses, but I've had a lot of songs to write, and records to make, and I've just found a lot of different ways of making music that's allowed me to stay in contact with my fans on... I guess it's been almost a yearly basis. So I like doing that a lot. I mean, that's how I remember the bands that *I* liked: you know, every six or eight months there was something going.

I'VE HAD A *DEVILS & DUST* DVD FOR A WHILE. WE JUST HAVEN'T PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON IT AND FOUND A WAY TO GET IT OUT. SO HOPEFULLY, AT SOME POINT...

The only thing that we've missed so far, because of the release schedule, was a film of the *Devils & Dust* tour. Which we have, and we've been in the process of working on, it's just we had so much going on, it was one of the things that just—you know, the Sessions Band kind of came up quick, and we didn't have the slot to get it out.

Plus you had the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary set in there, too.

Yeah, there were a lot of things that just took precedence.

But that DVD is still in the works, that could still happen?

Yeah, I have a real nice film—I think it's a collection of several nights that we played, I think there was some stuff from the last few shows in Trenton, which were some of my favorite shows of that whole tour, and some things from Boston when we shot there. It's a blend of a series of shows. I formatted it a little different than the actual show, because I found that it plays better a little shorter, when it's just me with a guitar on the screen.

Yeah, I could see that being a struggle bringing that to the TV screen. But it's great to hear it's still in the pipeline, we kind of thought that one was lost to the sands of time. Any idea when we might see it?

Well, I've had something for a while, we just haven't kind of put the finishing touches on it and found a way to get it out. So hopefully, at some point—I'd like to even just sell it at the shows, or find some other way of getting it to people, because at this point, if I do something, I like to document it, and I like to be able to get it to the fans.

And we're loving that. If I can help in any way, getting things out there *[laughs],* let me know!

Okay, great!

Back in '99, when you were heading out for the reunion tour, you talked a lot about being grateful that the whole band was still around, and still alive, that no one was a rock 'n' roll casualty. And here we are eight years later, and you're still able to do it again.

Yeah. That's something that you become more grateful for as time passes. You know, I just lost Terry, my great friend of 23 years.

Which I was very sorry to hear.

Yeah, that was a big loss. And so you're aware that things are finite. I've always said, it's like, "Hey, I've got my guys out there," and the band really did take care of one another over the years. Like I've always said, it's one of the things I'm proudest of, and I continue to be.

I mean, there are a lot of ways that life can take you, and you never know what tomorrow brings. And so to have that kind of stability... and not only that, but also just the personal relationships remain so thoroughly enjoyable, it's a great gift.

Does it enter your mind that this could be the last time out? A "farewell tour"?

Oh, I'll never do that, man *[laughs].* You're only gonna know that when you don't see me no more.

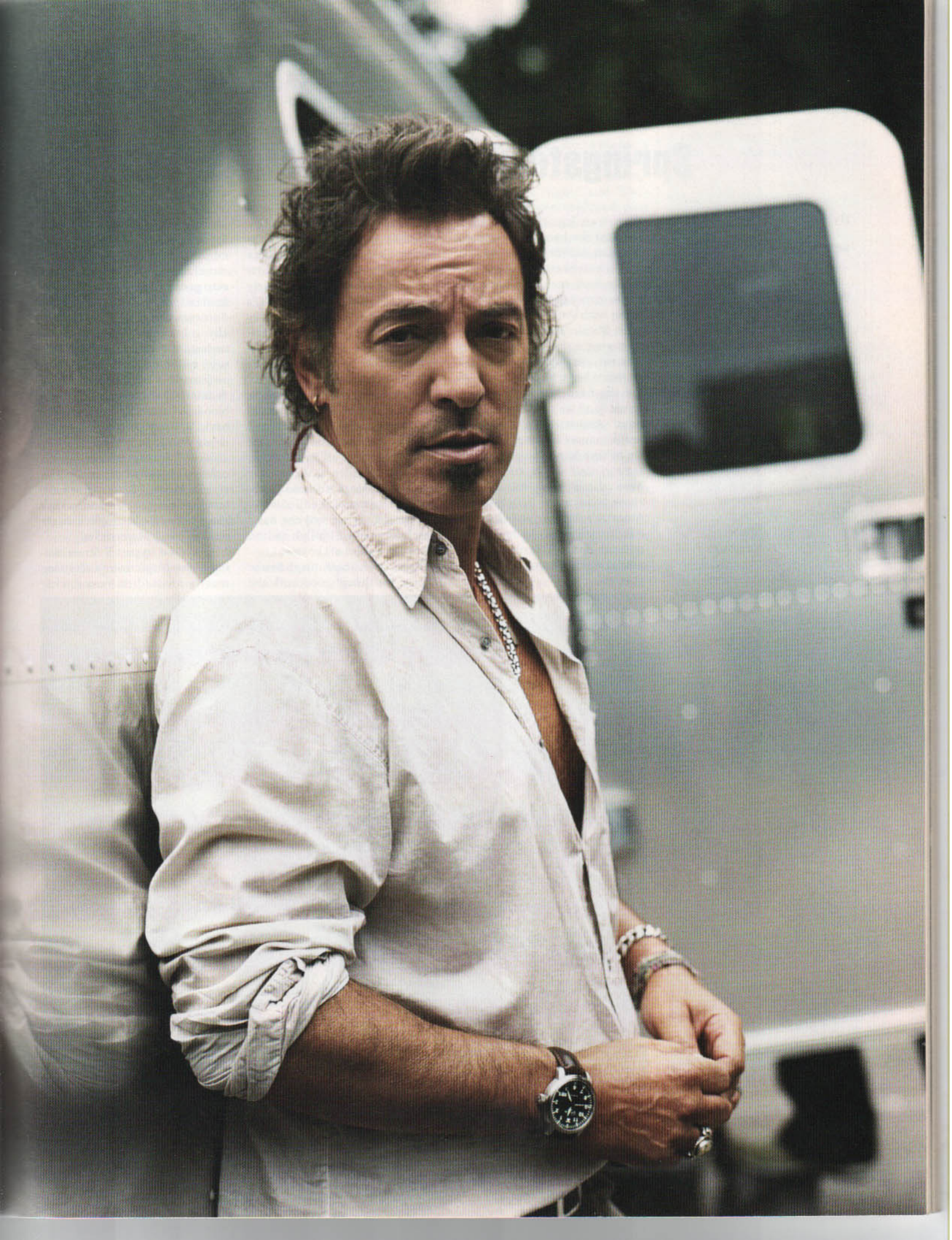
Not for *you,* I can't picture that... but for the E Street Band as we know it?

Oh, hell, I don't know. *[laughs]* There ain't gonna be any farewell tour. That's the only thing I know for sure. I envision the band carrying on for many, many, many, many, many, many more years.

Asbury Park, NJ, September 24, 2007.

MARK R. SULLIVAN PHOTO

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO



07 TOUR

"We plan to sing about it!"

Springsteen works his Magic

By Laura Kiniry

Tricks may be the territory of America's current government, according to Bruce, but Magic belongs strictly to Springsteen and the E Street Band. Well into its second North American leg, the *Magic* tour remains the band's most potent show in decades, pure rock 'n' roll wholeheartedly delivered throughout each two-hour-plus performance. Bruce and the boys, along with Patti Scialfa and violinist Soozie Tyrell, a *Rising* and Sessions tour member back with E Street, are improving with age. As Bruce has acknowledged, "We are the hardest rockin', best E Street Band we've ever been right now." And with such energetic performances night after night, we believe him. The pace is blistering, and while new songs have played a big role in each show, especially during North America's first leg and throughout Europe, fans who have come to hear Springsteen's quintessential works haven't been disappointed.

Despite some rough practice sessions for crowds at Asbury Park's Convention Hall, where pacing seemed off and flow sporadic, along with an early morning double set at NYC's Rockefeller Plaza for the *Today* show, and a late-start rehearsal performance that evening in New Jersey's Meadowlands (all of which Bruce collectively dubbed "E Street Boot Camp"), the show pulled together quickly. Coinciding with the album's October 2 release, the *Magic* tour officially kicked off in Hartford, CT, and despite a three-year hiatus (the *Magic* recording sessions being more of an individual process), Bruce and the band absolutely nailed Philly's second show—the third of the tour.

From the beginning, Bruce shared his thoughts on both the album's and tour's overall theme. "When we last toured," he stated on his website, "it felt like a moment when we could reassert our great American democratic ideals and pull together both domestically and internationally.... Instead, our leader drove us head on into an unnecessary war, rolled back our civil rights and made a long list of policy decisions that cost us trillions in blood and treasure... Well, we're back, and we plan to do something about it. *We plan to sing about it!*" Springsteen ended his online announcement with "Rise Up! Be strong! Better times are coming!"—a proclamation that's since become the implicit backbone of every *Magic* show.

As typical in past E Street outings, the *Magic* tour's first leg mostly focused on introducing

MAGIC TOUR '07

WARM-UPS

Sept. 24	Asbury Park, NJ
Sept. 25	Asbury Park, NJ
Sept. 28	New York, NY (The *Today* Show)
Sept. 28	E. Rutherford, NJ

NORTH AMERICA

Oct. 2	Hartford, CT
Oct. 5	Philadelphia, PA
Oct. 6	Philadelphia, PA
Oct. 9	E. Rutherford, NJ
Oct. 10	E. Rutherford, NJ
Oct. 14	Ottawa, ON
Oct. 15	Toronto, ON
Oct. 17	New York, NY
Oct. 18	New York, NY
Oct. 21	Chicago, IL
Oct. 22	Chicago, IL
Oct. 25	Oakland, CA
Oct. 26	Oakland, CA
Oct. 29	Los Angeles, CA
Oct. 30	Los Angeles, CA
Nov. 2	St. Paul, MN
Nov. 4	Cleveland, OH
Nov. 5	Auburn Hills, MI
Nov. 11	Washington DC
Nov. 12	Washington DC
Nov. 14	Pittsburgh, PA
Nov. 15	Albany, NY
Nov. 18	Boston, MA
Nov. 19	Boston, MA

EUROPE

Nov. 25	Madrid, ESP
Nov. 26	Bilbao, ESP
Nov. 28	Milan, ITA
Dec. 1	Arnhem, NED
Dec. 2	Mannheim, GER
Dec. 4	Oslo, NOR
Dec. 8	Copenhagen, DEN
Dec. 10	Stockholm, SWE
Dec. 12	Antwerp, BEL
Dec. 13	Cologne, GER
Dec. 15	Belfast, IRE
Dec. 17	Paris, FRA
Dec. 19	London, UK

A.M. SADDLER PHOTO

new material. Songs like "Gypsy Biker" and title track "Magic"—performed as a duet with Patti, or during her absence, Soozie—adorned early setlists, with "Last to Die." "Long Walk Home," and "Devil's Arcade" as mainstays late in the set. The show's de facto opener, "Radio Nowhere," kicked in immediately following an "Is there anybody alive out there?" wake-up call from Bruce. And a mid-set "Livin' in the Future" allowed him opportunity to speak on American traditions and cultural landmarks (the Jersey Shore, cheeseburgers and french fries, the L.A. Aqueduct) that have been soured by injustices like illegal wiretapping and a virtual repeal of Habeas Corpus (the right to trial by jury) over the past six years. Carried over from Springsteen's recent Seeger Sessions tour, "American Land" became *Magic*'s standard show-closer, performed before an always exuberant, on-their-feet crowd. The Irish-influenced track brought Danny Federici and Roy Bittan center stage with accordions, along with Soozie on fiddle. Lyrics were displayed on venue JumboTrons, and there seemed to be at least one jig performed in every audience.

Patti also got a chance to showcase her work, with early sets featuring one of her newest tunes, "Town Called Heartbreak," performed as a duet with Bruce. She's since been absent from much of the tour, beginning sporadically with Chicago's October 21 show and continuing straight through Europe and into North America's second leg. While Springsteen provides nightly updates on her whereabouts ("home on emergency leave with three teenagers... beer kegs... pot brownies... She knows how to deal with that!") Soozie's filling the void, working with Bruce on the "Magic" duet, harmonizing on songs like "Tunnel of Love," and providing the tour a welcome feminine dose.

The most notable difference from recent E Street tours is the show's unyielding pace, a relentless drive of hard-rocking sets. When Bruce hushes the crowd mid-show, he's not starting into a subdued "You're Missing," as on the *Rising* tour, but instead breaking into a foot-stomping, full-band version of "Reason to Believe," complete with bullet mic. Straight-through showstoppers like Sacramento's April 4 mid-set run of "Murder Incorporated," "Candy's Room," "Because the Night," and "She's the One" have replaced past tour peaks and valleys. Bruce also broke out one of his more obscure tracks, "Thundercrack," a lot early on, an opportunity to relay his long history with certain cities, like Philly, L.A., and New York.

By the October 15 Toronto show the band had seemingly hit their stride. Bruce's seamless banter with young audience members and increasingly common audibles—including (an unsoundchecked) "Thunder Road" at Chicago's October 22 show, which Bruce dedicated to the pit's "young folks"; a Michigan "Ramrod" performance for a sign-holding six-year-old Noah; and East Rutherford's October 10 "Cynthia" performance, only the second time the E Street Band has ever performed it live—became show stalwarts. -cont.-

GARRY SINGS!

Toward the end of the 2007 tour—as Bruce and much of the band were struck by a nasty flu while on the road in Europe— Backstreets *caught up with E Street bassist Garry Tallent for a quick Q&A on the tour's progression.*

GUY ACETO PHOTO

How's the *Magic* tour going so far? Have you managed to avoid that bug that's apparently going around?

The tour is going great, and the European audiences have been fantastic. The response to the new CD has been fantastic, too, and it has built during our tour. We will be continuing to tour into the summer, returning to the States and to Europe. Many of the stadium shows in Europe have sold out in record times. It's an exciting time that reminds me of the *Born in the U.S.A.* days more than 20 years ago.

The band, I feel, is as good or better than ever, and Bruce's dedication to the cause of the music amazes me nightly. Not to mention the sheer stamina. Even with a stomach virus going around, only one show had to be postponed for one day. Luckily I have avoided the stomach bug and must only endure the jet lag that always takes me over on this trip.

Any song you're itching to play that hasn't been on the setlist yet?

I always enjoy the unexpected moments and the requests out of nowhere. They haven't completely stopped, either. We have lost track of the number of songs that are available to pull out at any time. I personally would like to be able to hold up a sign saying "Point Blank" or "From Small Things," but we can't play 'em all... or can we?

We've spotted you actually stepping up to sing background vocals—what the hell?! It's great to see—what's inspired you?

The audiences have taken to singing along with every word, which is infectious. I have to join in.

—interview by Christopher Phillips

MAGIC TOUR '08

NORTH AMERICA

Feb. 28	Hartford, CT
Mar. 2	Montreal, QC
Mar. 3	Hamilton, ON
Mar. 6	Rochester, NY
Mar. 7	Buffalo, NY
Mar. 10	Uniondale, NY
Mar. 14	Omaha, NE
Mar. 16	St. Paul, MN
Mar. 17	Milwaukee, WI
Mar. 20	Indianapolis, IN
Mar. 22	Cincinnati, OH
Mar. 24	Columbus, OH
Mar. 28	Portland, OR
Mar. 29	Seattle, WA
Mar. 31	Vancouver, BC
Apr. 4	Sacramento, CA
Apr. 5	San Jose, CA
Apr. 7	Anaheim, CA
Apr. 8	Anaheim, CA
Apr. 13	Dallas, TX
Apr. 14	Houston, TX
Apr. 22*	Tampa, FL
Apr. 23*	Orlando, FL
Apr. 25	Atlanta, GA
Apr. 27	Charlotte, NC
Apr. 28	Greensboro, NC
Apr. 30	Charlottesville, VA
May 2*	Ft. Lauderdale, FL

**rescheduled date*

EUROPE

May 22	Dublin, IRE
May 23	Dublin, IRE
May 25	Dublin, IRE
May 28	Manchester, UK
May 30	London, UK
May 31	London, UK
June 14	Cardiff, UK
June 16	Düsseldorf, GER
June 18	Amsterdam, NED
June 21	Hamburg, GER
June 23	Antwerp, BEL
June 25	Milan, ITA
June 27	Paris, FRA
June 29	Copenhagen, DEN
July 4	Gothenburg, SWE
July 5	Gothenburg, SWE
July 7	Oslo, NOR
July 8	Oslo, NOR
July 11	Helsinki, FIN
July 15	Donostia, ESP
July 17	Madrid, ESP
July 19	Barcelona, ESP
July 20	Barcelona, ESP

U.S.A.

July 27	E. Rutherford, NJ
July 28	E. Rutherford, NJ
July 31	E. Rutherford, NJ
Aug. 2	Foxborough, MA
Aug. 30	Milwaukee, WI

For further details, links, and (fingers crossed) additions, see backstreets.com/tour.html

Changing of the Guard: Giordano Subs for Federici

By Christopher Phillips

On November 19 in Boston, as Bruce and the E Street Band played their final U.S. show of the year, it was clear that something unusual was happening at the TD Banknorth Garden. Sure, leg-closers are always special. Setlist watchers were having a ball, as the tour premiere of "This Hard Land" went into Danny Federici's signature song, "4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)." But soon enough it became clear—even to those at the Garden who had no inkling that Federici had been privately battling cancer—that this wasn't just a "closing night special," it was Danny's night.

Bruce threw it to the organist for an extended solo on "This Hard Land," and as Danny next strapped on the accordion for "Sandy," Bruce hollered to the crowd, "Ladies and Gentlemen, winner of the Ted Mack Amateur Hour!" (He wasn't joking—Danny won it as a kid.) Soon they were celebrating E Street History with the "The E Street Shuffle" and the tour premiere of "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," with attention on Danny—a founding E Streeter—all the while. Nils Lofgren, in particular, kept making trips up to the organ riser, to squeeze his shoulder and play by his side. And as the "Freeze-out" gave way to "Kitty's Back," Danny took a solo that, in the best of ways, felt like it would never end.

In the final moments of the show, as the E Street Band took their bows downstage, what had been floating in the air all evening became just a little more explicit. Bruce threw his arm around his old friend, bringing him center stage for a bow of his own as the ovation went on. With Danny's natural reticence, this was all fairly low-key. The majority of the audience couldn't have known about Danny's worsening condition, or the leave of absence he was about to take; they were applauding a man and a band who had played their hearts out all night. The spontaneous cheer of *"Danny! Danny!"* erupting from fans on the floor couldn't have been solely for the fact that this would be Danny's last show of the year with the E Street Band. So while a wet-eyed moment for some, both onstage and off, really it was a celebration—as the performance had been—of the profound musicianship of one of Springsteen's oldest bandmates.

Within 48 hours, on the day before Thanksgiving, the announcement came on Springsteen's website: " Danny Federici, an original member of the E Street Band, is taking a leave of absence from the current Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band tour to pursue treatment for melanoma. Charles Giordano, who played with Bruce as a member of the Sessions Band, will temporarily fill in for Danny until he is able to return. Federici has been playing keyboards with Springsteen since the late '60s. Said Springsteen, 'Danny is one of the pillars of our sound and has played beside me as a great friend for more than 40 years. We all eagerly await his healthy and speedy return.'"

Amid Thanksgiving prayers for Federici and an outpouring of well wishes on internet message boards, support for Charles Giordano was on fans' minds too for the role he was about to take on. Giordano, other than perhaps only David Sancious, was the natural choice to take it on. Already a Sessions Band fan favorite and a known virtuoso in his own right on the keys, he played both organ and accordion on tour with Springsteen in 2006; the general sense was: "If anyone can do it, Charlie can." Only a week after that Boston show, he hit the road with the E Street Band for the Magic tour's three-week European leg. While longtime E Street fans couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness when they looked at the organ riser, "the new guy," by all accounts, handled a daunting task with skill and grace.

"Charlie is doing a great job filling some very large shoes," Garry Tallent told *Backstreets* as the European tour carried into December. "He has worked tirelessly to cover Danny's parts—and with great calm and humor when he is caught off-guard with the occasional audible that emerges. Everyone looks forward to Danny's healthful return, but we're thankful to Charlie for his grace and capability in the hot seat. The band has helped him jump some hurdles and coached him along, but he has put in a lot of hard work on his own."

Once the *Magic* tour resumed in 2008, it soon became apparent that both Giordano and the band had

Danny in the fall, Oakland, CA October 26, 2007.

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

Charlie in the spring, Portland, OR March 28, 2008.

JOSEPH QUEVER PHOTO

continued to put in the work. With Danny still on the "injured reserve list," as Max Weinberg put it, Charlie continued to fill in as the E Street Band began their second North American leg. While relatively static European setlists were generally attributed to getting Giordano up to speed, Springsteen was now feeling confident enough in the band's new line-up to start really throwing those setlist curveballs. The first night of 2008 alone, in Hartford, CT, brought three new songs to the set: "So Young and in Love," "Loose Ends," and "Janey Don't You Lose Heart." As he would continue to do in the coming weeks, Bruce gave the crowd Danny's regards: "He's doing all right. Hopefully he'll make it out for a few shows on this leg of the tour."

Speaking with the *San Jose Mercury News* about Danny's absence, Steve Van Zandt conceded that "it's certainly a bit strange after 33 years... Charlie has got the impossible job of trying to come in and replace the irreplaceable. He's been as great as a person could be in that situation. He's a terrific guy, he's a great keyboard player and he certainly has the sensitivity to know that he's just there representing one of the founding members of the band."

In mid-March, an optimistic Van Zandt talked to *Rolling Stone* about Danny: "He's doing great at the moment. It's a bit miraculous. I talked to him last week and he sounds great. I just hope it lasts. In a month or two we'll hopefully see him back."

Instead, it was mere days. "Basically, Max had dinner with him," Steve later explained, "and five hours later, he talked him into coming out" for the March 20 Indianapolis show. Springsteen was clearly thrilled to announce mid-set: "We've got a special treat tonight—Danny Federici is with us!" After Federici and Giordano shared a hug, Charlie quietly slipped away to let Danny take over his old station for "The Promised Land." "He's gonna make me go old school on you!" Bruce cried, as "Spirit in the Night" and "Sandy" followed. Danny played eight songs in all on this special night in Indy, a one-off for 2008, returning for a full encore complete with "Kitty's Back," "Backstreets" (which Bruce dedicated to him), and "American Land," with all three keyboard players.

"It was fantastic to see him again on stage," Van Zandt told the *Mercury News*. "You know, he's had a tough time. He's fighting this thing, and he continues to fight it.... Everybody had a great night."

STOP PRESS

Less than a month after Indy, Danny passes away

Danny Federici died on the afternoon of April 17, 2008 at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City after a three-year battle with melanoma.

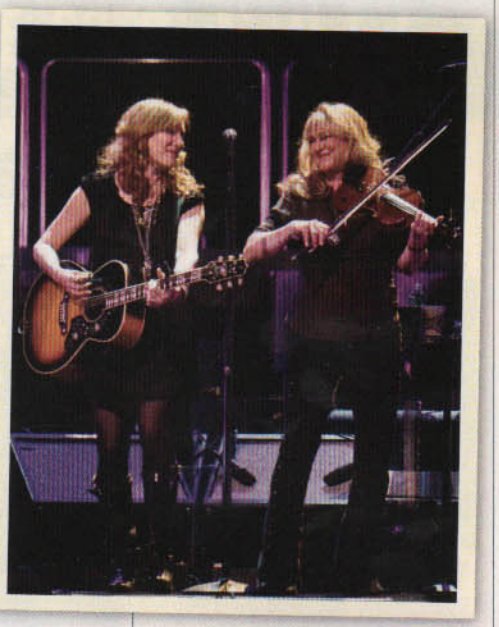
"Phantom Dan" Federici was a founding member of the E Street Band; his experience playing with Bruce Springsteen goes even further back, to pre-E Street bands Child and Steel Mill in 1969 and 1970. On his website, Springsteen writes: "Danny and I worked together for 40 years—he was the most wonderfully fluid keyboard player and a pure natural musician. I loved him very much... we grew up together."

Shortly after Danny's passing, three *Magic* concerts in Florida (Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, and Tampa) were postponed; new dates are reflected on the schedule on page 19.

The Federici family and the E Street family request that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Danny Federici Melanoma Fund, online now at www.thedannyfedericimelanomafund.com.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Danny's family, friends, bandmates, and blood brothers; we here at *Backstreets*, and surely all those fans touched by his spirit, mourn with you.

Watch for a tribute to Danny in Backstreets #88.



A.M. SADDLER PHOTO

While Bruce mentioned in a December interview, "[The early part of] the tour tends to stay a little more rigid than it might six months from now, you know, or three months from now," *Magic*'s European leg remained pretty standard (too much so, for some disgruntled tour followers), though this was likely due to Danny Federici's absence and allowing fill-in Charlie Giordano time to acclimate with E Street. Not that Europe didn't see its fair share of tour debuts: a streamlined album version of "The River"—sans electric guitar—premiered in Denmark, while "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" made its first appearance at a Netherlands show, rescheduled from a day earlier so Bruce and a few band members could recover from a stomach flu. Regardless of a rigid setlist, Europe's shows were some of the best, partially due to the spirited audiences. As Bruce told one reporter, "[European audiences] don't come to listen to the show. They come to live through it."

Though familiar celebrity faces regularly appeared in *Magic* tour audiences (sightings included Bono, James Gandolfini, and Caroline Kennedy in New York, and *Entourage's* Jeremy Piven, and Henry Winkler in L.A.), most eyes were drawn to the on-stage guests. Five Sessions Band members, including Lisa Lowell on vocals and Greg Liszt on banjo, joined the E Street Band at Madison Square Garden; singer-songwriter Joe Grushecky met up with them in his home town of Pittsburgh; and Wolfgang Niedecken took the stage in Germany. But it was husband-and-wife team Win Butler and Régine Chassagne, band-mates and Arcade Fire co-founders, who stole the Ottawa show. After joining in with Bruce on "State Trooper," the E Street Band kicked into "Keep the Car Running," Arcade Fire's striking song from their album *Neon Fire*, further igniting an already energetic crowd.

After a nearly two-month break, Springsteen and the E Street Band returned for their second North American leg, jumping back into Hartford, CT with the exuberance of a band itching to work rather than wishing for an extended vacation. For the first time since the tour began, "Radio Nowhere" was switched out as show opener, Bruce shuffling in "So Young and in Love," "Night," and "No Surrender" on three consecutive tour nights.

Additional tour highlights to date include Seattle's 24-song stellar set with "Trapped" and "Point Blank" tour debuts; Milwaukee's March 17 six-song encore including Steve Van Zandt's "Loose Ends" request, "Jungleland" and "Meeting Across the River" (featuring an appearance by renowned jazz bassist Richard Davis); and Danny's March 20 Indianapolis eight-song return. As the tour continues along the U.S. West Coast and throughout the South, expanding to Europe's open-air stadiums before returning to North America in the summer, fans can expect setlists to include a wider variety of classics and rarities, and performances to continue full-speed, from a band that is, without question, the hardest-working around.

How long will Springsteen and the E Street Band's Magic last? As Bruce told one reporter, "There ain't no last time, there's just this time." And this time is now. Stay tuned.

Being for the benefit of...

Help for His Friends

While Bruce Springsteen was occupied for much of 2007 with the recording of *Magic* and the subsequent tour, he wasn't too busy to perform for a number of causes close to his heart. Both before and during the *Magic* tour, Springsteen turned up to lend his support and thrill attendees at venues far smaller than on his current jaunt with the E Street Band.

Cobert, Springsteen, Chapin, and Browne, June 11, 2007.

WENDY COBERT PHOTO

MAY 12, 2007
COUNT BASIE THEATRE
www.countbasietheatre.org
Red Bank, NJ
with Brian Wilson

Bruce Springsteen joined Brian Wilson for two songs at the Beach Bash, the Basie's 5th annual gala fundraiser. Earlier in the evening, an item in the auction—a Challenger surfboard signed by both the Beach Boy and the Boss—might have been a tip-off for the surprise guest to come in the night's encore. After playing a full set, Wilson brought Springsteen out for **"Barbara Ann,"** Bruce on a white Les Paul and singing along on the chorus. For the final song, Bruce was back sans guitar to sing harmonies on **"Love and Mercy"** from Wilson's 1988 self-titled solo debut.

JUNE 11, 2007
WORLD HUNGER YEAR
www.worldhungeryear.org
Chelsea Piers
New York, NY
with Jackson Browne, Tom Chapin, and others

Chelsea Piers in New York City is a mecca for all types of sports fun and entertainment. You can go bowling, hit a bucket of balls off a rooftop driving range, or play ice hockey. It is, however, an unlikely concert venue. Yet on June 11, 2007, a few hundred lucky people were treated to a mini performance by none other than the likes of Jackson Browne and Bruce Springsteen.

The occasion was World Hunger Year's annual Chapin Awards Dinner, at the Lighthouse catering facility. Founded in 1975 by Harry Chapin and radio talk show host and present Executive Director Bill Ayers, WHY is a non-profit organization that operates programs to help battle hunger and poverty—and a favorite charity of Springsteen's. This 2007 dinner honored a handful of organizations and people who made a difference in their respective communities including, most notably, Jon Landau Management and Jackson Browne.

The event's silent auction included the entire Springsteen catalog as one lot (there are people out there who don't own every Springsteen CD?! Who knew?). In the last minutes of bidding, there seemed to be particular interest in this one. "People are bidding in hopes of getting everything personally autographed," a WHY staffer hinted, an eager, knowing look crossing her face. "Yes," she confirmed, "Bruce arrived five minutes ago." He was seated, at the center table, in front of the stage, surrounded by the Landau management team.

The awards ceremony began, led by Tom Chapin, Harry Chapin's brother. Each of the night's recipients were honored, also including the Lower Eastside Girls Club in New York City and Hard Rock International; for JLM, Jon Landau brought up a few members of his team for an acceptance speech that acknowledged the important mission of WHY, the hard work of his staff, and the inspiration of his client and friend Bruce Springsteen [see sidebar for full text].

Jackson Browne's honor was saved for last, a joint award from both ASCAP and WHY. The presenter from ASCAP told a story about how she had once mistakenly neglected to invite Browne to an important industry event, relaying how she dreaded calling him to make amends. To her surprise, when she did call him, he answered the phone himself ("Jackson Browne Enterprises, Jackson speaking" he later kidded) and had very graciously accepted her apology.

Then the moment came for Jackson Browne to say—and sing—a few words. Where there might usually be a dais or a podium at the head of the dinner tables, there was instead a small stage with a few mics, some guitars, and a piano. Several guests got up in a "dignified" manner and moved about the room to get a better view (no doubt an ingrained behavior from many years of stage rushing at concerts).

Jackson's speech was low key and humble. When he was done, he picked up his guitar and performed a lovely ballad. Then Tom Chapin and the house band—including Jon Cobert on keyboards, Michael Mark on bass, and Harry Chapin's daughter Jen on vocals—got back up on stage to do the evening's closing number. Cobert described the scene onstage to *Backstreets:*

"After Jackson finished his tune, we got back up on stage with him, and Tom looked over at Springsteen: 'Bruce, why don't you come up and join us for a tune?' Bruce jumped up on stage and grabbed Tom's acoustic guitar from its stand. He came over to me at the piano and said, 'I'll watch you for the chords.' We were doing Harry Chapin's song, **'Circle,'** which is a traditional ending at these events. I noticed that Bruce's guitar wasn't

plugged in, so I swung my vocal mic over in front of the guitar, shouted him a couple of chords, and he played along."

Despite the fact that Springsteen commands the spotlight in front of thousands of people on a regular basis, he did nothing at all to draw attention to himself or upstage the honorees. He knew it was their night and acted accordingly, genuinely and graciously applauding the honorees, his colleagues, and his friend Jackson Browne. Still, at least from Cobert's vantage point, Bruce was hard not to notice: "He was playing some tasty lead lines, and the guitar was about six inches away from my ear. It was about as intimate as you could get on a stage. Since there was no drummer, I could hear every note.

"Afterwards," Cobert continues," we shook hands, and I wanted to say, 'You're a pretty good guitar player, do you have a card?'"

— Kaliope Kostas

JUNE 12, 2007
JOAN DANCY AND P.A.L.S.

www.joandancyandpals.com
Two River Theatre
Red Bank, NJ
with Jackson Browne

The following night, at the site of Springsteen's *VH1 Storytellers* performance, he played with Browne once again. This was a benefit show for Terry Magovern's ALS charity (Joan Dancy and P.A.L.S.), with Magovern himself speaking to the crowd about his late companion and movingly quoting Browne's "For a Dancer" (one of her favorites).

After a lengthy performance on both guitar and piano (including "I Am a Patriot," "Late for the Sky," "In the Shape of a Heart," and "The Pretender"), Browne brought his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductor to the stage. The two old friends reminisced a bit about meeting in the early '70s, before closing the show together with two songs.

Bruce was relaxed and in good spirits, smiling broadly as he traded vocals back and forth with Jackson on **"Running on Empty."** In keeping with the mood and purpose of the evening, **"Will the Circle Be Unbroken?"** was a darker, more somber performance to close the show.

—reporting by Jose Rovalino

June 28, 2007

JUNE 28, 2007
LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Florentine Gardens
River Vale, NJ
with the Jeff Lubin band

A lucky June bride and groom had a wedding singer who really knew his stuff. As reported on HankLane.com: "After performing his hit song **'If I Should Fall Behind,'** Bruce Springsteen joined Jeff Lubin (of Hank Lane Music) and the rest of his band on the stage for a rockin' rendition of the Chuck Berry classic **'You Never Can Tell.'** The dance floor, packed with Mr. Springsteen's immediate family and personal friends, erupted into a wall of cell-phone cameras and video-recorders as the boss traded off solos with Jeff Lubin band saxophonist, Matt Blostein, and keyboardist, Mark Bonder. The Boss could later be seen on the dance floor enjoying himself as the Jeff Lubin band cranked out pop/rock classics such as John 'Cougar' Mellencamp's 'Hurts So Good' and Bon Jovi's 'Living on a Prayer.'"

-continued-

THERE GOES MY HERO

Jon Landau accepts the W.H.Y. award for JLM

Fellow WHY honorees Jackson Browne and Jon Landau, June 11, 2007

First of all, I'm thrilled to accept this award on behalf of my co-workers at Jon Landau Management. Sue Berger is our newest team member and has been with us for five years, Alison Oscar has been here for 13, Jan Stabile has been working with us for 17, and my partner Barbara Carr has been working with me for the last 27 years. (And, of course, there is my wonderful wife Barbara, who inspires me every day and is herself a full-fledged member of JLM.)

Each of these people are extraordinarily caring and dedicated and have had a chance to work on World Hunger Year projects, as well as the many other charitable ventures that our office has been involved in, especially our own extraordinary Kristen Ann Carr Fund. They are consistent, dedicated, and absolutely fixed in their commitment to their work and their giving of themselves. I love them all and couldn't be happier to have them as friends and colleagues.

But it is Barbara Carr who is the primary connection between JLM and the problem of hunger in America. Since 1980, Barbara has had the privilege of working with Bruce Springsteen on all of his issues and social concerns, none greater than hunger in the U.S. Quite simply, Bruce has never done a show in the United States without acknowledging and offering his support to the people on the front lines of this fight in every community that he plays in.

On Bruce's behalf, Barbara has worked with what sometimes seems like every food bank and anti-hunger group in the country, as well as World Hunger Year itself, to facilitate and make real Bruce's goals. One of the high points of their work has been the special relationship that Bruce has created with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and their great leader Kathleen DiChiara, and Barbara's ability to help that connection to thrive and grow.

To do all this, Barbara doesn't just give of her time and skills, she gives of her soul.

Barbara's relationship to World Hunger Year is very personal. Former Reverend Bill Ayers married her and Dave Marsh in 1979. And Dave is another person I want to acknowledge for his constant encouragement and insights into the ways and means of continuing the fight for social justice.

I got to know the co-founder of this organization, Harry Chapin, not long before his tragic death. Harry was a guy who brought the energy, the good fight, and the belief that we can all make a difference with him. He is to be remembered and honored tonight, and always, for believing and fighting for things that were bigger than himself and for teaching us that there is a better way.

Finally, there is Bruce. From time to time he has had the chance to publicly thank me for whatever it is I do. But while he is sitting here I just want to say that having Bruce in my life for the last three decades has been the gift of a lifetime. In that masterpiece of masterpieces, "Thunder Road," Bruce wrote, "I ain't no hero, that's understood." Nonetheless, and suffice it to say, Bruce has been my hero ever since I've known him, and it is his leadership and guidance that has made this honor for all of us possible tonight. I am eternally grateful for his presence in my life and offer my most heartfelt thanks. It hardly feels like enough. I will always be in his debt, and its a debt I can never repay—in fact, it's one I will treasure always.

In closing, I want to offer a final thank you—to Bill and Harry for their inspiration, to Barbara, Jan, Ali, and Sue for their dedication, and to my friend Bruce for helping us all in our search for the higher ground—through his artistry, his commitment, and his vision of a world as it one day might be.

OCTOBER 13, 2007
MONMOUTH COUNTY SPCA

www.monmouthcountyspca.org
The Weinberg Farm
Rumson, NJ
with the Max Weinberg 7

With the *Magic* tour underway, Bruce and his drummer took a detour off E Street to play the "Kick Up Your Paws" fundraiser. Well, of *course* Max did, it was at his house! For Max and Becky Weinberg's benefit for the Monmouth County SPCA, with about 500 in attendance, Bruce joined the Max Weinberg 7 at the end of their set for six songs, including two of his own: **"Seven Nights to Rock," "634-5789," "From Small Things," "Kansas City," "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out,"** and **"Twist and Shout."** Max told the *Asbury Park Press*, "Terry Magovern was involved in this event, too, and he was looking forward to it, so it's dedicated to him."

Below: At the SPCA benefit, Bruce jams with the MW7, helps with the drawing, and gives the host a hug.

NOVEMBER 7, 2007
BOB WOODRUFF FAMILY FUND

www.bobwoodrufffamilyfund.org
Town Hall
New York, NY

On November 7 at the legendary Town Hall, Springsteen rolled in, literally, astride a 1991 Harley Davidson motorcycle that he donated for auction to raise funds for the Bob Woodruff Family Fund, the beneficiary of the event dubbed "Stand Up for Heroes."

Conan O'Brien, the evening's emcee, introduced Bruce as "the man who stole my drummer," to which Springsteen replied, "No, Conan, I believe you stole *my* drummer." On a bill that also included Robin Williams, Lewis Black, and Brian Regan—this was part of the New York Comedy Festival—Bruce deferred to the funnymen and went on first, but he wasn't going to leave the laughs solely to them.

The acoustic set began with the *Magic* tour premiere, if you will, of **"This Hard Land"** and closed with **"Thunder Road."** But the real highlight was what came between, the first, and to date only, solo performance of **"Devil's Arcade,"** which took on additional poignancy given the number of veterans in attendance. It was a passionate reading that replaced the power the E Street Band has been bringing to the song every night on stage with moody focus on the song's impressionistic narrative.

Between songs, Springsteen told some old jokes, including a few he said he learned from his kids. But he earned his biggest laughs with his "last, best joke," a chestnut that bears repeating verbatim: "A guy goes into his doctor's office for his yearly check up. And the doctor says, 'You gotta stop masturbating, my friend.' And the guy says, 'How come?' [And the doctor says,] 'I'm trying to examine you.'"

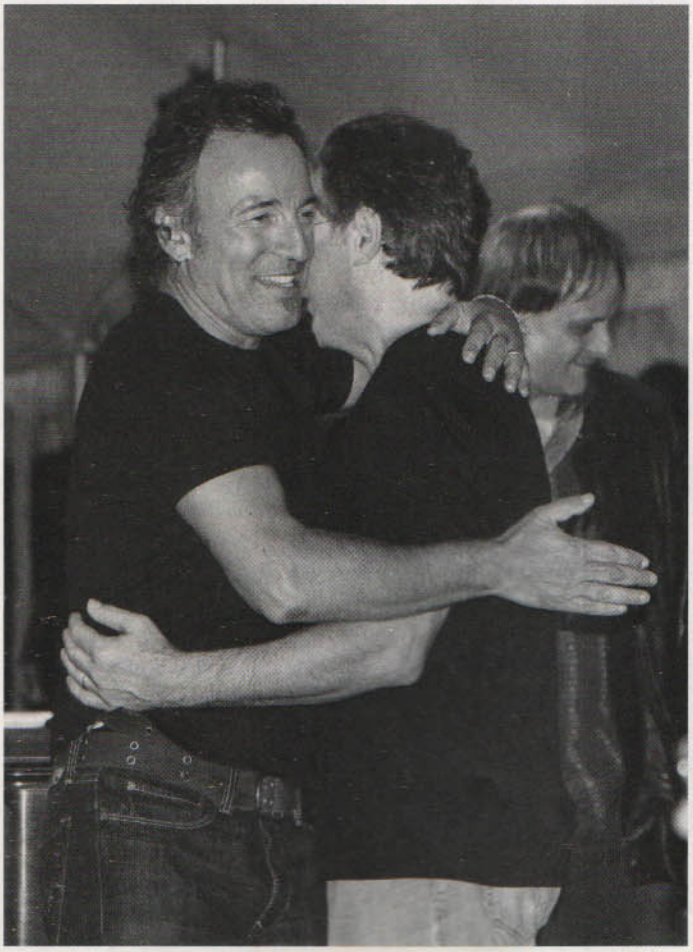
Published reports said the Stand Up for Heroes benefit raised more than $2 million for the Woodruff Family Fund.

—Erik Flannigan

Let it roll (L-R): Alan Spina, Glenn Spina, and Springsteen, November 7, 2007.

MICHAEL BRAZINSKI PHOTO

CHRIS GOIONE PHOTO



CHRIS GOIONE PHOTO

NOREEN ROTH PHOTO

"I had a friend, was a big baseball player": Patti, Bruce, and Bernie Williams do "Glory Days," November 9, 2007.

NOVEMBER 9
JOE TORRE SAFE AT HOME FOUNDATION

www.joetorre.org
Chelsea Piers
New York, NY
with Patti Scialfa and Bernie Williams

What was that about this being an unlikely concert venue? The fifth annual Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation benefit featured Bob Costas as emcee, a whole host of Yankees in the crowd, Billy Crystal cracking wise, and Bruce himself batting clean-up with a rollicking half-hour acoustic set.

Saying that he had been a Yankee fan since he was a kid, Bruce offered a riff on the *Beverly Hillbillies* theme about Torre heading for Beverly (Hills, that is...) which went into a hard-strummed take on the Rivieras' **"California Sun."** Bruce modified some lyrics on this one, too, in honor of Torre: "I'm goin' to where the palm trees are sway-in'/Nobody gonna second-guess just who I'm playin'!"

After **"Working on the Highway"** it was a new original, written for the occasion in the spirit of "I'm Turning Into Elvis" and "Freehold"—call this one **"Yankees Win."** Bruce joked it would be the first cut on his next album, and the song got a little ribald (and a lot of laughs) as he described Patti in a Yankee hat and pinstripes. Solo takes on **"Thunder Road," "Bobby Jean"** (with Bruce struggling to find the melody), and **"Dancing in the Dark"** followed.

Finally, he asked Patti and Bernie Williams to join him. Patti grabbed a tambourine, Bernie a guitar (and he knows his way around it, for sure). Bruce made a joke about Bernie getting too old for baseball—but he's just a baby if he goes into the music business at this point. They let it go with a great rendition of **"Glory Days,"** the song about not crying over what you had and what you lost. Bernie did a wonderful jazz interlude during the middle of the song. Patti and Bruce sang together, Bernie and Bruce sang together, and everyone just had grins on their faces.

Looking around the room, there were Bob Costas and Joe Torre singing along, Bernie's kids excited that he's up on stage doing a song with Bruce Springsteen, and just a lot of people happy to get this close to Bruce in such an intimate environment and watch him enjoy himself. This was not a job tonight. This was a favor for a good friend, for a good cause, and it was all wrapped up in Yankee pinstripes. I doubt if next year's benefit will have this same flavor, but these last licks were good.

—reporting by Pam Farquhar

MARCH 8, 2008
THE RANNEY SCHOOL

www.ranneyschool.com
Eagle Oaks Country Club
Farmingdale, NJ
with Tim McLoone & the Shirleys

This wasn't one of the blow-out shows that Bruce puts together himself for his kids' schools, but with the 21st Annual RSPA Panther Ball on a night off between New York stops on the *Magic* tour, Springsteen decided to put in a surprise appearance. Hair slicked back, he strapped on a guitar to play **"Glory Days"** with his old friend Tim McLoone.

March 8, 2008

FIRE IT UP!
And the crowd goes wild

My brother Al is in charge of all of Bruce's motorcycle business. Whatever needs to be done, Al is on top of it. When Bruce agreed to donate his 1991 Harley-Davidson Softail to the Stand Up for Heroes benefit, Al and I were to drop it off for the auction. However, once we arrived with the bike, nobody knew what to do with it. So the guy in charge of the show asked me and Al if we would mind waiting for Bruce to come off the stage, then they would call for us to roll the bike out to be auctioned off. We were more than happy to be a part of the event.

So after the three songs Bruce walks backstage, the crowd is cheering, and they call for the bike. I begin to roll it out, and Bruce gets all excited—he comes over and says, "No, wait! Let me get on the bike and push me out on it!" I thought that was really cool of him. So we roll Bruce out, and the crowd goes nuts!

Now, we had been warned the bike could have no gas in it, due to certain city bylaws, and it could not be started no matter what. But one thing we know is that if Bruce wants to start his bikes, they better always fire right up. Thats my brother's job—have Bruce's bikes perfect at all times, ready to run in any situation. So we left about a quarter-tank in the bike... just in case.

So, back to the stage: the crowd is going nuts, Bruce is smiling, and the crowd starts chanting, *"Fire it up! Fire it up!"* The announcer says, "No, no, we can't fire it up in here..." and suddenly Bruce hits the switch, pushes the start button, and fires it up—revving it and freaking out the whole crowd.

My brother and I got to be out there with Bruce while the crowd went crazy—he definitely drove up the price with his last-minute stunt. Bidding shot up to $87,000. Winner—Robin WIlliams' wife! She bought it for Robin as a surprise.

My brother and I are just a couple of regular guys from Jersey. I live in Asbury Park, my brother in Rumson. But for a few hours backstage—hanging out with James Gandolfini, Robin Williams, Lewis Black, Conan O'Brien and a bunch of others—and a few minutes onstage, thanks to Bruce, we got to feel like stars ourselves. And the best part, Bruce raised $87,000 for the charity.

—Glenn Spina

Appleseed's Seeger postscript

The Springsteen Sessions

By Jeff Vrabel

Jim Musselman was there for the beginning of Bruce Springsteen's detour into the Seeger Sessions, so it really only makes sense for him to be there at what, at least for the time being, is the end of it.

In September, Appleseed Recording—of which the activist attorney Musselman is president and founder—marked its tenth anniversary with a double-shot of new releases, commemorating a lively decade of music and social activism during which it has released no fewer than 85 albums.

The new discs come with extra Springsteen-related benefits beyond the sonic and social angles: they contain the first-ever collaborations between Springsteen and Seeger—one on a Bruce song, no less—adding what Musselman describes as a satisfying denouement to the Seeger Sessions project.

"I sort of sensed the 'Seeger' chapter coming to a close," Musselman said from his Pennsylvania office, "and I thought that it would be a good O. Henry-type ending to the whole thing where, with kind of a sense of humor, Pete would be doing Bruce—and that it might be nice to finally put the two of them together on the same song. I feel like Bruce has carried the torch of writing about the dispossessed and capturing the essence of America in his words, and I thought it'd just be nice to make that connection."

Some quick background: the new Appleseed sets are one part future and one part past, but both are grounded by Bruce and Pete. The first (the past) is a two-disc compilation drawn from the label's history called *Sowing the Seeds: The 10th Anniversary;* among its 37 tracks is the first-ever collaboration between the two on a Springsteen composition, the slightly renamed "Ghost of Tom Joad," which finds Springsteen re-animating the 1995 track

Seeger and Springsteen play "Hobo's Lullaby" in a rare appearance together, September 29, 1996.

ROGER MASTROIANNI PHOTO

while Seeger contributes spoken-word verses. The other release (the future) is a benefit disc entitled *Give US Your Poor,* which has rock, folk and blues artists performing songs with singers who are or have been homeless. *Poor* finds Springsteen and Seeger banding together on the enduring "Hobo's Lullaby," an unreleased track from Bruce's work with the Sessions players that the Seeger has now decorated with new banjo work and vocals.

There's a certain closing-the-circle quality to all this. It was Musselman who first lobbied for Springsteen to contribute to Appleseed Recordings' Pete Seeger tribute comp, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone,* back in 1997. And it took a lot of lobbying: Jon Landau politely declined his first two requests. But something about the third one clicked, so much so that Springsteen took the opportunity to tackle not one but six tracks for the project (including "Hobo's Lullaby"), recordings that would eventually serve as the foundation for *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions.*

"Bruce really immersed himself in it," Musselman said. "Usually you send an artist a recommendation, and they might do that song or pick another, whatever. I've worked with over 100 artists on tribute CDs, and they'll do one or maybe two tracks. But with Bruce, obviously something was connecting, and I sensed something more might come of it."

When it came time to come up with ideas for the anniversary sets, Musselman repeated what he did ten years ago: marry Bruce and Pete on record. The difference was this time, he switched the names around. "Basically, it was the 'Springsteen Sessions,'" Musselman said with a laugh.

For *Sowing the Seeds: The 10th Anniversary,* it didn't take Musselman too long to pitch "The Ghost of Tom Joad" to the folk icon: "Pete goes back with Steinbeck and *Grapes of Wrath,* so certainly that connection is there. I also just thought it was a great song. And when I showed it to Pete, he really liked it and said he wished he was younger so he could sing the song in concert. But I also thought that in many ways the last verse of 'Tom Joad'—'look in their eyes, Ma, you'll see me,' that whole verse—I thought that's how Pete has lived his life in so many ways, that he's been there, and it's very interesting to have Pete sort of assuming the Tom Joad character in his recitation."

Musselman arranged and conceptualized the idea, and he traveled up to Seeger's New York cabin on—get this—July 4, 2006, to have him lay down his vocals. When Seeger had finished his work, Musselman shipped an mp3 to Jon Landau, who responded with approval. "He thought it went back to the talking blues of Woody Guthrie. So I asked him if he thought Bruce might want to do something with it. Landau loved the idea."

Also included in the set's two discs are Seeger's updated "Bring Them Home," with Billy Bragg, Ani DiFranco, Steve Earle, and Anne Hills; exclusive new tracks by Seeger, DiFranco and Donovan (with a new take on "Universal Soldier"), as well as chestnuts by Tom Paxton, Jackson Browne and Joan Baez, Bruce Cockburn, Roger McGuinn, and more.

Give US Your Poor
17 New Recordings To Help End Homelessness
Jon Bon Jovi · Buffalo Tom
Mario Frangoulis · Danny Glover
Jewel · Sonya Kitchell · Mighty Sam McClain
Natalie Merchant · Keb' Mo'
Madeleine Peyroux · Bonnie Raitt
Tim Robbins · Pete Seeger
Michelle Shocked
Bruce Springsteen
Sweet Honey in the Rock
Dan Zanes
Appleseed

The other anniversary title, *Give US Your Poor,* is a more traditional Appleseed release, a 19-track set of blues, folk, and spoken-word tracks all centered around musicians and writers who are now or have formerly been homeless. In addition to its cause, the record is noteworthy for its roster of contributors: alongside Springsteen and Seeger's "Hobo's Lullaby" are

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM MUSSELMAN

Seeger's New York cabin, where he recorded his parts for "Hobo's Lullaby" and "Ghost of Tom Joad."

tracks from Jon Bon Jovi and Mighty Sam McClain ("Show Me the Way"), Natalie Merchant and a choir of Boston singers ("There Is No Good Reason"), rising chanteuses Sonya Kitchell ("So Lonely") and Madeline Peyroux ("I Think It's Going to Rain Today"), alt-rocker-turned-kids'-music-all-star Dan Zanes ("Boll Weevil," with Kyle Middleton) and spoken-word pieces from Danny Glover and Tim Robbins.

"We had many Berklee College School of Music and University of Massachusetts interns that had recorded so many homeless or formerly homeless artists, so we got together all those tapes and found what we thought might fit with artists," Musselman said.

The process unfolded over about a year and a half. "It's a little like trying to get 50 camp kids into a school bus at lunch hour," Musselman laughs, "because so many people are doing projects and touring and recording. But I think the artists understood the purpose of the project, and based on the things we've done in the past, people have an understanding about what we're doing. Jon Bon Jovi opened up his home studio and spent a lot of time recording his song; Natalie Merchant flew up to Boston and recorded with five formerly homeless artists, produced and led the band. She really embraced the project."

As for "Hobo's Lullaby," Musselman said simply that he was intrigued by the idea of playing a little Six Degrees game, officially connecting a song Guthrie and Seeger both frequented with Springsteen. Plus, there was the pleasing novelty angle: "It would be the first and only recording with Pete and Bruce and the Seeger Sessions Band," Musselman said. Musselman recorded Seeger's part over Springsteen's original recording at their Independence Day rendezvous in New York.

With Appleseed, Musselman, of course, has had the enviable occasion to work with countless singers and songwriters with his label, but has reserved a special place for Springsteen. "There've been so many times where I didn't know if we could even keep going, because of how hard it is at times," he said, "But always something magical would happen out of Bruce's camp. And the integrity that Jon and Bruce and Barbara (Carr) have had is incredible. Every time they've made a promise, they've kept it."

Still, he admits that he hasn't had much time to reflect on the anniversary aspect of the whole thing. "It's not something you can really focus on when you're running a small indie label—you're like a little sapling among these giant redwood trees. You're constantly having to fight for everything, for any attention you can get.

"But what's beautiful about the whole thing is that I took my daughter to see the Seeger Sessions tour, and you've got these hundreds of teenage girls singing 'Pay Me My Money Down' and 'O, Mary, Don't You Weep'—and then coming out of the concert singing them, too. I thought, 'Wow, that's what this is all about, keeping these songs alive.' I told Pete about that, and he was really touched."

Jeff Vrabel is a South Carolina-based writer whose music writing has appeared in Playboy, Billboard, No Depression, *the* Chicago Sun-Times, *and PopMatters.com. He can be reached at his obligatory blog at www.jeffvrabel.com.*

MAGIC IN THE AIR

"Girls" goes iTunes-only; promo singles still tangible

Topping our list of new releases have to be the *Magic* album and its accompanying promotional singles. *Magic* itself dropped first on LP, September 25, and the CD a week later on October 2. Both came in gatefold sleeves; the LP has an inner lyric sleeve and is pressed on thick, 180-gram vinyl. Some outlets offered a free promotional lyric/photo booklet with the purchase. At press time no commercially available hard-copy singles have been released from *Magic*, but a few promo-only CD5s are out there. "Radio Nowhere" made the rounds as a one-track disc housed in slimline case with picture sleeve. The U.S. version sports a "Radio Nowhere" graphic sleeve, while the Japanese single—quite rare, if collectors' market prices are any kind of barometer—has a fantastic B&W picture insert of Bruce and the Esquire. And hey, you gotta love a CD that quotes the "I Just Want to Hear Some Rhythm" line in big letters on the back above the Japanese text!

The second single from *Magic* was the tour encore fave, "Girls in Their Summer Clothes." A two-track promotional CD5 features a nice color picture sleeve and a non-LP "Winter Mix," subtly tweaked by Brendan O'Brien, that clocks in at four seconds longer than the album version (also included). Commercially, iTunes offered up a digital release of "Girls" that includes both cuts from the promo single, as well as a video for the song directed by Mark Pellington, and a live recording compiled from several tapings of the song at 2007 concerts.

SERVE SOMEBODY: November 6 saw the release of *Serve 2: The Hard Rock Benefit Album*, a CD that gives those of us who missed out on the Sessions Band's *PBS Exclusive* CD another chance to pick up one of the tracks from that live EP and pony up for one of Bruce's favorite causes, WHY (World Hunger Year), at the same time. The album gets off to a great start with Bruce and the Sessions Band's *Live in Dublin* (out)take on "The Ghost of Tom Joad," leading into exclusive tracks by major-leaguers like Bob Dylan, Jackson Browne, and The Hold Steady.

SOUNDTRACKS: "Blood Brothers" showed up on the Wal-Mart-exclusive, 12-cut soundtrack to *Dale*, the biopic about the late Dale Earnhardt that also boasts songs from the likes of CCR, Travis Tritt, and Motley Crue. . . . "Devils & Dust," meanwhile, found an appropriate spot on the *Body of War: Songs That Inspired an Iraq War Veteran* album, a two-CD set serving as a companion piece to the documentary of the same name, including tracks by Eddie Vedder, Neil Young, and Springsteen family faves Against Me! The film focuses on the true story of paralyzed Army soldier Tomas Young who, as the subtitle suggests, chose the album's tracks. All proceeds from album sales go to Iraq Veterans Against the War.

WHACKED OUT: The Boss contributes to Patti Scialfa's third solo album, *Play It as It Lays*, as part of The Whack Brothers Rhythm Section, along with Clifford Carter, Steve Jordan, Willie Weeks, and fellow E Streeter Nils Lofgren. Bruce provides B3 organ, guitars, and harmonica—he even walks away with a photography credit! Is there anything the man can't do? Note to collectors: *Play It* was available from some outlets with a gratis lyric/photo book (featuring more Bruce-credited Scialfa shots) similar to the *Magic* freebie, and the record was also available, well, as a record! The extremely limited LP release brings Bruce's vinyl appearance total up to two since we last reported, something we here at Backstreets couldn't be happier about. Long live vinyl!

—John Howie, Jr.

IN REVIEW

Play It as It Lays

Patti's Passionate Gamble

By Daniel Wolff

You know how, when you first put on new music, you don't really pay attention to the words, or even the shape of the songs? You just listen to what it sounds like: get the general feel. When I first put on Patti Scialfa's new one, *Play It as It Lays*, what registered was this catchy, in-the-groove rock 'n' roll and the voice of a woman with something to say. As the songs churned by, the band was clearly having a great time slipping from rhythm to rhythm, finding the hooks, remembering old tricks and inventing new ones. And the voice—throaty, determined—kept insisting there was a story to tell, and it mattered. What the story was, I had no idea. And I wasn't particularly anxious to find out. I liked the heft of the music, the purposefulness. Meaning could come later.

You know how, when you play new music a second time, parts of it jump out? Like landmarks, they locate where you are, even if it isn't totally clear how you got there or where you're going. On the opening cut, Scialfa's singing about looking for Elvis, looking for inspiration; I got that much from the chorus. The tune slips forward like a kind of modernized country blues, dense with echoing voices. The slide guitar, the harmonica, put you on a backcountry dirt road, but the slinky beat makes it sound like the interstate isn't far off. "Work a little harder," she's calling by the song's bridge, "if you want my trust." Who's she talking to? And why does it sound like she's found her man, but that's just a beginning?

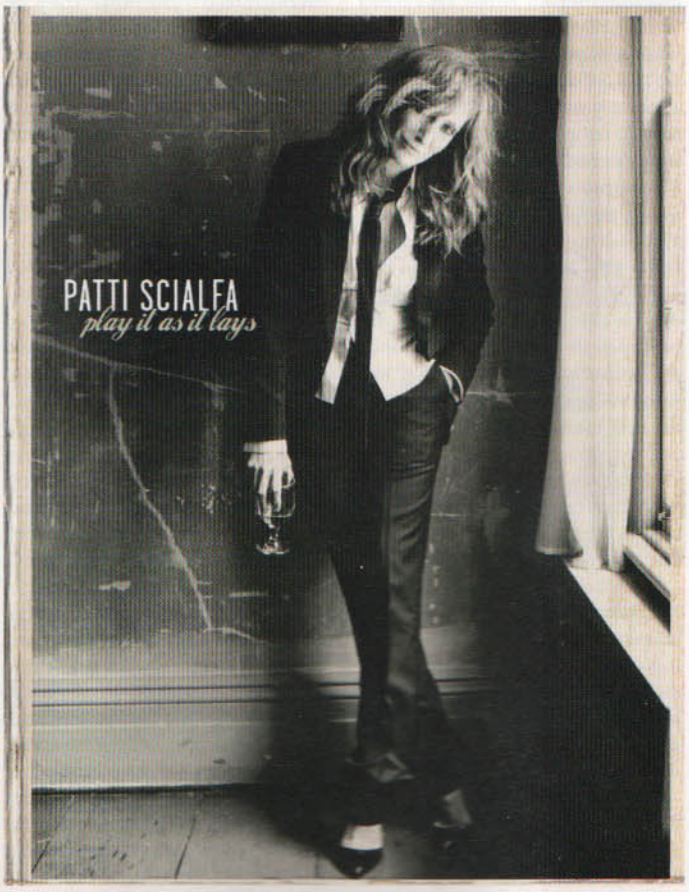
It was on the second cut that I got my bearings: actually, at one specific moment. Starts with a nice, laid-back beat; then that sweet but cutting lead voice; and then a big female chorus comes in—"cry, cry, cry"—and Scialfa sings what almost seems like an aside: "Like any woman would." And just before she finishes saying that, the chorus behind her goes: "doo-lang doo-lang doo-lang." Yea, *that* doo-lang: right off the old Chiffons hit, "He's So Fine."

It's a straight quote, clear as day, calling up the whole early-'60s girl-group mix of tender and tough. Stops you right in your tracks, and you listen for it when the chorus comes round again. In the space of a line, the song travels from big, declarative, soul music sadness—"cry, cry, cry"—to that sigh of recognition: "Like any woman would." But when that's followed by the Chiffons with all its memories and associations, it carves out a whole other turf: Scialfa's own. This is music that knows its past. And steps right up and acknowledges it—not for nostalgia's sake, but to place itself in that tradition. In a half-second, without time to think, you feel yourself lifted up, reminded where the music (and you) came from, and plunked back down in an adult landscape: sly and, at the same time, dead serious. It's like a woman who says, with a wink, "I've got some history. And we've got some work to do."

You know how you try to clear a little space once music has grabbed your attention? Never mind the lyric sheet just yet, or who's playing what. But it's earned a closer listen. You start separating out individual cuts and the details within those cuts. So, the break on the doo-lang song is sung by a bluesy voice, not Scialfa's, that sounds like it comes from an era before rock 'n' roll. As if we were on a search, and it was taking us back in time. And the song ends with the repeated circling of a needle on an old vinyl record. How do lovers make each other cry? Over and over again.

Seems that backcountry dirt road leads to a town called Heartbreak. On the next cut, anyway, that's where the singer says she's living. The tune's got this "Heard It Through the Grapevine" groove thanks to a rhythm section so deep I had to sneak a look at the credits: producer Steve Jordan on drums, Clifford Carter on keyboards, and the unbelievable Willie Weeks on bass. Their laid-back pocket perfectly matches Scialfa's slurred voice, giving her time to talk about stuff she's now saying goes all the way back to Eve and Adam. Then, modulating up, she mentions this dream she's been having: a guy swinging a sledgehammer against cold stone. She doesn't have to say any more; the dark beat does that. If we wonder what he's breaking, we just got to remember the name of her town.

You know how part of you doesn't want to work a little harder? I mean, to figure out how to be with someone: the fights, the tears, the late night talks. But also when you're listening to music: you just want to float with it. Scialfa gets that. Little conga beat, light organ riff (almost a calliope), and we're into a Latin shuffle. If her man doesn't want to work for her trust, that's fine. Play around with other women, she sings; play at being tough; play at some high-wire circus drama. Just don't bet on her staying. She'll slide out of the picture, thanks, quick and free as that conga. You want the pleasures of the surface? The cut after "Play Around" kicks off with this



piercing electric guitar. (I sneak another look: Nils Lofgren.) And suddenly we're into a soul grind: a strut so thick with sex it sounds sticky. Again, Scialfa acknowledges where she's learned her moves: Stax horns morphing into electronica and a tip to that old Archie Bell song, "Tighten Up." But this time she invents her own "doo-lang." She has the back-up singers break down the glories of the bedroom into simple, hilarious shorthand: "sugar sugar sugar baby bang bang touch."

You know how certain records have a through-line? Maybe you don't. These days, we do a lot of the sequencing ourselves: download a single—put it on a mix tape with some others, or hit "random"—and get jazzed by the changes. We're the DJ, the author. Scialfa's songs have enough great hooks and beats that you could pull them and use them that way. But at some point, I realized this wasn't about singles. Or being single, for that matter. It's more about making connections. Connections between people and between songs. That's the land she's traveling through, and we probably should have known it from that first Chiffons quote: a land where the past hooks up with the present, where lovers hook up (or try to), where one song hooks up with the next.

That means you start listening differently. So, when a cut opens with an acoustic guitar, and Scialfa sings, "Oh—such an ordinary start," it comes as a kind of confirmation when the slap beat kicks in, and the extended rhyme turns out to be: "for a day that ends with its intent to break your heart." The song's called "The Word," and she paraphrases "You Win Again," the Hank Williams country blues: "The word is out/I've been defeated." Then for the centerpiece, she lifts stanza and melody from that weird, girl-group tune that sounded like an old English ballad, "Sally Go Round the Roses." We're in a garden of haunted guitars. Scialfa's 21st century voice promises, "There's nothing in those roses that can hurt you now," and some ancient voice echoes in agreement. But it's as if each picked note drew blood.

In a funny way, you could call *Play It as It Lays* a resistance record. A grown woman tries to resist caring so much. The band falls into a slow groove and just lets it go for a while. Enter Scialfa, sounding a little older, maybe even wiser: "I could have had it bad for you/and that's not good." It's not good to pay this much attention. Better to do that shuffle-off, or that sex-strut, than to get into all the hard work of loving. Once you hear the record as a kind of spiral, circling into its subject, connections begin to grow on their own. The soil's so fertilized—so harrowed back and forth with old songs and new—that Scialfa barely has to plant the seed, and great needy blossoms appear. "It's just that your bed looked so pretty," she begins—and never finishes the thought. "All right," she sings, "all right. It's understood."

The shudder of Scialfa's voice on the last note sounds both forgiveness and horror at the routines we fall into. The heart breaks; the wheel keeps spinning. To play it as it lays is to stick with your bet—and it isn't play at all.

By then, even an up-tempo tribute to a woman racecar driver—all innocent fun like a Beach Boys song—had me waiting for the pay-off. "Run run run," goes the chorus, the beat banging along, and then the singer points out that a great driver gets great not by luck, of course, but through "miles of sweat, hard labor, and skill." There we are! Back on that same track, circling. And if you want to see the victory flag, you gotta work a little harder, stand and deliver.

The CD climaxes with the title track. As author Joan Didion copped the title of her novel, *Play It as It Lays*, out of the casinos—leave my bet where it is, thanks—Scialfa steals it back. "Sad song on the radio," she starts, and after putting us on an empty road (maybe that first dirt road?), she adds: "you know the one." We do. It's the one—the thousand and one—she's been referring to all along. And this cut, from the familiar thump of its first beat to the straining tone of her voice, *is* that song on the radio. It's almost like she's singing along to some famous and unknown ballad. "Play It as It Lays" doesn't try to resolve the hurt that couples do to each other. "You surrender/You confess/You make amends/You get undressed/And call it a night." The shudder of Scialfa's voice on the last note sounds both forgiveness and horror at the routines we fall into. The heart breaks; the wheel keeps spinning. To play it as it lays is to stick with your bet—and it isn't play at all.

After the grand title song, Scialfa adds a coda. It has the simple melody of a nursery rhyme. "I've been down your black ladder/I've been down your dark stairs/Tell me that our love matters/Tell me that you care." Barely two minutes, it lasts just long enough to circle back and reverse roles. So, the last line becomes: "I'll tell you darlin' that I still care." It's a kind of pledge of allegiance, sad and strong.

You know how some music seems to call on you to dig a little deeper, to listen again? On the last cut, the singer half-whispers, "Tell me all my work is done." But she knows it isn't. And by now, so do we. Because that, finally, is what this rich, compelling music insists on: that human beings never quite get it right, and continue to need each other, and that it matters. Turns out that, yeah, *Play It as It Lays* could be called a resistance record. But it doesn't resist caring too much; it resists giving up.

Previously published at counterpunch.org. Daniel Wolff's most recent writing includes the introductory essay to Eric Meola's Born to Run: The Unseen Photographs *and* 4th of July, Asbury Park: A History of the Promised Land.

the backstreets jukebox

1. Bruce Springsteen
Magic
Columbia (LP)

2. The White Stripes
Icky Thump
Warner Bros. (CD)

3. The Cribs
Men's Needs...
Warner Bros. (CD)

4. Midlake
The Trials of Van Occupanther
Bella Union (CD)

5. Bob Mould
District Line
Anti (CD)

6. Patti Scialfa
Play It as It Lays
Columbia (CD)

7. Against Me!
New Wave
Sire/London (CD)

8. The Gutter Twins
Saturnalia
Sub Pop (CD)

9. Wire
Read & Burn 3
Pink Flag (CD-EP)

10. Jason Isbell
Sirens of the Ditch
New West (CD)

10 records that helped make this issue possible

THE INSIDE

Nils reveals his six-string secrets

Magic Tricks

By Roderick Jones

When some people sit down to watch a live video of Bruce and the E Street Band, it's a workout.

They're not launching themselves off the couch to applaud the band back out for an encore or chanting along to "Badlands," of course. Instead, they have an acoustic guitar on their laps and a finger on the pause button of the remote, poised to click whenever the camera zooms in on someone's guitar. The close-ups help them figure out what key the song is in, where the capo is on the neck of the Boss's guitar, or what chord shape is being used as the foundation for a solo. For them—okay, for *us*—dissecting the songs and putting them back together is a way of communing with the music and the people who make it.

Maybe you recognize this behavior in yourself. If so, I think Nils Lofgren knows you're out there.

At the same time he's been wowing arena crowds on the *Magic* tour with his "Because the Night" and "Prove It All Night" solos, Lofgren has been releasing guitar lessons through his website, nilslofgren.com, in an ongoing "Online Guitar School" video series. Filming in his home studio, Lofgren uses a remote control to zoom in and out on himself, his guitar, and a set of muscular fingers that embody *float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.* Captured as well are the occassional flubbed note, retuning of strings, sips of coffee, and intrusions of his pet dog, Groucho. As opposed to an "instructional video" series that might include tablature, visual aids, or special features, these are true one-on-one lessons. While chock full of content, they're not scripted; the guitar work is tight, but Nils is loose. He talks about Hendrix, but pausing to point out the photo on the wall, he also ad-libs about Roy Buchanan, a much-lesser-known master of guitar harmonics.

The inspiration for the lessons came out of Lofgren's participation in some rock 'n' roll fantasy camp events beginning in the '90s. "When you're sitting in a room with a bunch of eager students, even if there are beginners with no talent to more advanced people with talent, it's pretty simple to find a common denominator and get everyone involved with a piece of music," Lofgren said in a recent phone interview. "That's one of the beauties of rock 'n' roll, from something quite elaborate to something as simple as 'Louie Louie.' You can find something for anyone to do at any level."

Lofgren introduces his first video lesson by saying that the intended audience is the intermediate-level guitarist. Not far into a seven-minute acoustic performance of his 1975 song, "Keith Don't Go," it's easy to fear for your pride—this doesn't seem like "intermediate" stuff. But over the next 45 minutes, Lofgren breaks down each aspect of the song, from chord shapes to picking patterns to palm-muting strategies and more. "There might be advanced players that get a little aggravated with the pace of my lesson," Lofgren said. "But I wanted to take it slow enough that even somebody that's in the early stages could at least take a phrase and understand what I've done. Whether they want to stop the tape and work on it for a week or they pick it up in ten minutes, [I wanted to] at least have it be digestible."

With his classical training and a lifetime of professional musicianship, Lofgren incorporates a decent amount of music theory into his delivery. Though knowledge of scales and notes isn't necessary, and the terminology he uses won't prevent anyone from executing the moves he's demonstrating, the lessons will make more sense for people familiar with chord shapes and how the same chord can be played with different fingerings at different locations on the neck.

The biggest bang for the buck (the lessons cost $20 apiece) comes when Lofgren covers harmonics. Playing harmonics involves touching a string lightly with the finger of your picking hand in a particular spot while you pluck the string. Done correctly, it produces a bell-like chime. One of Lofgren's tricks involves alternating his picking of a string with and without the finger touching, and he describes the resulting sound as a "shimmer." I wasn't well acquainted with harmonics before watching the lesson—I thought it was just a cool-sounding way of tuning a guitar (and a technique that roadies seemed to like when they had the pre-show spotlight to themselves). But getting a close-up of Lofgren playing his introduction to "Countin' on a Miracle"—the basis of two intermediate lessons—is a sight to behold. Rock fans are used to seeing the fingers of lead players' left hands flutter up and down the guitar neck. But in playing a piece with harmonics, Lofgren does just as much fluttering with his picking hand; this technique may be what most sets Nils apart from many of his guitar-god contemporaries.

If harmonics—to say nothing of godhood—seem beyond your abilities, new lessons in the Online Guitar School are geared toward anyone just picking up a guitar. With four hour-long intermediate lessons under his belt, Nils turned his attention to beginners, offering first a "Beginners Crash Course," followed by a second hour for novices, "Blues Riffs & Chords."

At either level, the lessons' homegrown feel has the effect of putting you in a room with Nils, one-on-one. If there's a lack of polish, the consequence is an abundance of authenticity. At one point, he explains why he uses a capo and tunes the sixth string down a half-step for "Countin' on a Miracle." "The B minor to a G," he says, "these are two great chords, you know." He strums his pick across the strings from one chord to another, looking down at his guitar, then strums a few more times. "Oh," he says, looking back up abruptly, "A little spacy there."

There are several moments like that one that easily could have been edited out. Keeping them in gives the viewer a glimpse of what certainly seems like the real Nils. And everyone—regardless of how humble his musical abilities—is likely to find he has something in common with this guitar teacher.

To view samples and purchase lessons, visit Nils' Online Guitar School at www.nilslofgren.com

His guitar teachers

Early on, when I started with rock guitar, I did take lessons briefly from two different teachers. One guy was Scotty Ball, who wound up playing bass in one of my first solo bands and went on to be a classical bassist in symphonies. He was the local hotshot guitar player, and he was the very beginning, [teaching songs] like "Louie Louie" and "Boom Boom" by the Animals. Very rudimentary stuff, but very educational.

Then there was this guy Bill Singer. He had me doing *Chet Atkins Picks the Beatles* because I accidentally started playing with a thumb pick. I'll never forget... basically, when you hit or play, your hands want to grab at the same time, like a drummer. To get the fingers to all do something interdependent of each other was such a foreign thing. There was this piece, "Can't Buy Me Love." We would literally sometimes take it two bars a week, it was so difficult. But thanks to the patience and training of the accordion, I wasn't too frustrated or intimidated by it and I found out that, hey, sure enough, you put in a little time here and there, you can learn this stuff. It really became a huge part of my style that I play to this day.

Before the guitar, there was. . . the accordion?

I guess it was way back when I was six years old when I started the accordion. I learned so much about practicing to a metronome, taking things that basically you had no chance of playing, but over long periods of time, getting your muscle memory and ligaments up to speed. And literally by the age of seven, I was playing all the old-country Italian songs from my Sicilian grandmother on that side of my family, and playing all the Swedish old-country songs from my Swedish grandmother and grandfather. To this day I still can play those things, because they were just a part of my landscape growing up.

It was very good, even as a six- or seven-year-old kid, [to play] at family functions. It was just like, "Nils, play some of those great old songs we all love," and have a wonderful 80-year-old grandmother singing in broken Sicilian and English these beautiful, mournful old Italian ballads. Those were beautiful moments way before I even thought of being a professional musician, and a decade before I even touched a guitar. That was another type of education about the healing properties of music and why it's very important and beneficial to not get too serious about when and why you can and can't share it.

Keys to the Kingdom

Nils Lofgren describes the guitar lessons as "keys to the kingdom that I've spent a long time finding and discovering." Here are some other rooms Lofgren unlocked for* Backstreets *in a recent interview.

The genesis of the solo intro to "Countin' on a Miracle," one of the pieces featured in his guitar lessons series

We were on a plane flying into Amsterdam after a great show. Bruce came up to me and said, "You know, for the show tomorrow night, I'd like you to put together a little acoustic opener for 'Countin' on a Miracle.'"

I was up all night working on this thing, really being kind of ruthless. Like, *look, tomorrow night I'm doing a show in Amsterdam. I want to have a piece that Bruce will sign off on that I can play.*

I wound up being so excited that, even though I was tired, I stayed up all night long, played all day long. I was playing in the van to the soundcheck! I'll never forget, at the end of the soundcheck, they wanted to open the doors. So we were walking off the stage, and I stopped Bruce and I said, "Bruce, I don't know if I want to play this 'Miracle' piece cold on you, but I got something that I think might work."

He said, "Let me hear it." So we stopped the doors from opening for another 45 seconds, and I played it quick. He said, "That might work, give it a shot tonight."

I did, and it worked, and I was able to use it every time we played that song for the rest of the tour.

That was literally a creation that was done in, like, 18 hours.

Playing it safe vs. hanging out on the edge

When you're alone at home you can make mistakes all day long. When you're in front of an audience you want to hang out on the edge emotionally, but you want to play something that you have enough command of so you don't get in the way of the spirit or the feel that you're trying to get across. And that's born of thousands of shows in front of an audience and how far you can push yourself before the train wreck gets in the way.

I make mistakes. [In the guitar lessons] I talk about them as I make them, just to remind people that hey, a lot of times I'll come up with an idea that I can't quite execute. Hell, that "Youngstown" solo—I accidentally got most of it right on the *Live in New York City* DVD, but I made mistakes every night. It was a trade-off, looking for some reckless, passionate stuff, and sometimes my hands wouldn't quite execute it. It was worth it for the emotion I got out of the "fishing" I was doing—I call it "going fishing." Some nights I was like, "My hands won't do it." Other nights were like, "Wow, that's the best I ever did that."

If you play it safe enough where it's perfect execution every night, to me that's not the spirit, 'cause I wanna soar emotionally, too. That's the advantage of being on stage with a great band. It's not just to make the audience happy. The more we can get off, the more I think we're going to get the audience off.

Practice

When I was young and crazier, I'd play eight hours a day *in focus*. Now it's not that I don't love to play, but I'm older, I like to do other things, and I realize, hey, I might be tired, but if there's a guitar in my hands it still counts. If the muscles and ligaments are learning something new, even if you're not really hearing what you're doing, if you just do it in slow motion for half an hour while you're watching TV, it still counts. A lot of times it's a function of sitting in front of a sitcom—*Seinfeld* or *Will and Grace* or whatever—just mindlessly letting your hands go. And eventually, whether it's a week or a month down the road, depending on how difficult the movement is, your hands are going to mysteriously find an intimacy with the piece that they're not going to have any other way.

A lot of [fingerpicking techniques] were uncomfortable at first, but the sound of the notes was beautiful in my head. Ideally the most beautiful music is something that is, if not completely effortless, at least comfortable for the hands and muscles, so that the spirit comes through the notes and you remove the physical handicaps or limitations from the piece. And that's just a function of practice.

His vision for the online guitar lessons

I've learned that when you've got someone in front of you that wants to learn and is excited about it, the sky's the limit as long as you give them the real deal and share the real stuff with them. So I'm hoping that this will develop into something that will be ongoing for quite a while. Hopefully as it gets more popular I can solicit some feedback through my website and just take some suggestions to heart, because it is a new adventure for me and the spirit is in the right place.

—Interview by Roderick Jones

IN REVIEW

Bruce a guiding force in new memoir

Worlds Apart

GREETINGS FROM BURY PARK
By Sarfraz Manzoor
269 pp. Vintage, softcover

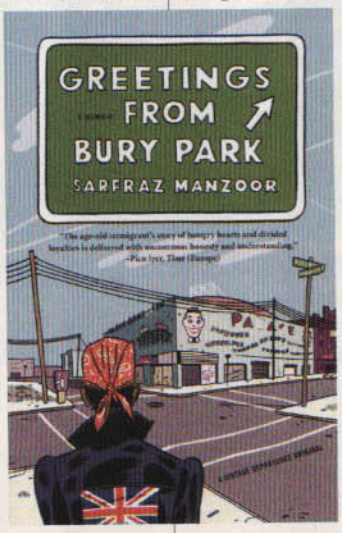
By John Massaro

A young Pakistani Muslim reared in Britain, Sarfraz Manzoor, once tried to convince his Pakistani-raised father, Muhammed Manzoor, about the wisdom of spending a summer in the United States."Why do you want to go to America anyway? Americans are unclean, immoral, look at how little their girls wear," his father said. And then Manzoor, whimsy not quite disguising hormonal honesty, notes: "I did not want to confess that was one of the reasons why I was desperate to visit." Such cross-cultural humor, as well as cross-cultural tension and poignancy, mark this engaging book.

Manzoor is a Pakistani Muslim, a successful British journalist, a Bruce Springsteen fan, and the author of *Greetings From Bury Park*. His coming-of-age tale might be easily dismissed by Springsteen's American fans. What can a thirty-something Pakistani Muslim tell them? Sure, Manzoor incorrectly, if charmingly, places the iconic southern United States city of Charleston in North Carolina. He misspells the name of E Street keyboardist and pianist, Roy Bittan. And he appears oblivious to the bitter irony of the *Tunnel of Love* tour, seemingly unaware that Springsteen's first marriage is sadly ending. Still, there is much for even the most sophisticated fan to enjoy in Manzoor's work.

The author provides refreshing cross-cultural insights on familiar Springsteen themes including family, friendship, class politics, love and sex, spirituality, and patriotism. He offers a rare glimpse of how these themes are experienced by a sensitive if confused and alienated young Pakistani Muslim. For as long as he can remember, Manzoor has had to try to accommodate his strict upbringing while confronting the worldly allures of the West. Throughout the often frustrating ordeal of growing up, he holds on to the inspiration and values he finds not only in Springsteen's music but also several intriguing, and rare for any fan, face-to-face encounters with his idol.

These encounters involve Bruce's dedication of an acoustic version of "Point Blank" to the author at a British concert, and another concert incident where a sweating Springsteen asks Manzoor to hold his Fender guitar so that Bruce can take off his shirt. One of the more intriguing and telling personal encounters occurs at Britain's Royal Court of Justice, where Springsteen was involved in a lawsuit against a company that had released unauthorized recordings of his earlier work.



On this occasion, Manzoor finds himself seated in the courtroom only two feet from Springsteen. During a recess, Bruce asked Manzoor what book he was reading. And when Manzoor replied by showing Springsteen his copy of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Jersey rocker (deftly rephrasing his "three-minute record" line from "No Surrender") proclaimed, "You'll learn more from that than any newspaper."

Backstreets readers should be wary of, quite literally, judging this book by its cover: *Greetings From Bury Park* is more about Manzoor's personal development and maturation, and less about Springsteen's influence on his life. Evidence of the latter does appear consistently throughout the text, often in more subtle than overt form; still, the overt influences are memorable. Manzoor resists his family's pressure for him to marry a Pakistani woman in a pre-arranged marriage of seeming strangers. His successful resistance is traced directly to a Springsteen classic: "When I heard 'Born to Run,' it had seemed the most romantic song I had ever heard; the girl I wanted to spend the rest of my life with was someone to whom I could say... 'we'll live with the sadness and I will love you with all the madness in my soul.' I was not going to be able to say that to a girl from some Pakistani village whom my parents had imported into the country."

Another telling overt nod to Springsteen's influence on Manzoor's life occurs when the author fully endorses his friend Amolak's view of the power of Bruce's music. Amolak notes: "The thing about Bruce is that it's like he knows everything you ever felt, everything you ever wanted, and he can describe it better than you. That's what I love about him so much: there isn't a situation you will ever go through that Bruce will not have a song for."

Manzoor's handling of two Springsteen themes are particularly moving: the evolving dynamics of father-son relationships, and the bitter-sweetness of one's longing and searching for a promised land. The father-son theme often plays out with the rebellious, angry son, after a long period of often bitter conflict, coming to better understand and love his father. Manzoor, however, adds an intriguing twist to this familiar Springsteen theme. Bruce Springsteen and his father, Douglas, had their epic battles, but at least they shared an American nationality and upbringing. They co-existed divided by a generation but immersed in a similar, if evolving, American ethos. Not so for Manzoor and his father. For them, there were not only the daunting generational differences and disagreements but also those tensions heated still more by a combustible clash of cultures. Still, Manzoor clearly relates to Springsteen's father-son experience, noting that until he discovered Bruce, the only singers he listened to "sang about dancing on the ceiling and total eclipses of the heart, not their troubled relationships with their fathers."

The cultural differences between Springsteen and Manzoor are, of course, many. Raised a Muslim, young Manzoor religiously follows a nightly ritual of lovingly massaging his father's feet and dutifully turning over to his father any money he earns. One cannot imagine a young, rebellious Bruce placidly acquiescing. Manzoor does. And while the two might have little in common culturally, they both come to share the experience of weathering clashes with their fathers and enjoying a moving resolution of their earlier conflicts. In passionate words as easily uttered by Springsteen, Manzoor writes: "When I was younger, I didn't want to know who my father was because [he] had nothing to do with me. How wrong can a son be?" And adds: "Where once it was resentment which inspired me, now it is the hope that in my own life I can do his memory proud. These days I am a willing prisoner of my father's house." Somewhere, Douglas Springsteen is smiling.

Manzoor, especially as a boy, embraced the abundant freedom and opportunity he perceived in his long-anticipated promised land, the United States. He

longed to someday live and work there, recalling: "All my hopes were encapsulated in the life I imagined was possible in the United States."

He recounts the memory of his 1990 visit to the roof of the east tower of the World Trade Center: "I was in the country I had always wanted to see, the city I had always wanted to visit, and I was on top of the world." He adds that what he loved especially about the United States at that "magical time" can clearly be traced to Springsteen's music: "I was thinking of the number of times I had heard 'Incident on 57th Street' and 'New York City Serenade.' I was thinking that I was in a country where no one cared if I was Pakistani or Muslim."

And then, September 11, 2001. Manzoor recalls watching the World Trade Center horror unfold on television with his mother. He writes, "My mother was crying. 'Those poor people, all they were doing was going to work,' she said. 'Going to earn money for their families, why did they deserve to die? Who would do such a thing?'" Manzoor can only remain silent. Pressing him to translate into Urdu what they both were hearing, his mother asked again, "Who are the idiots that would take innocent lives? Do they not have a conscience? Taking fathers from children. What are they saying? Do they know who did this?"

Breaking his long silence and likely confronting his own horrible realization, Manzoor must tell her, "They're saying it was Muslims." He writes that he learned a bitter lesson that day, after thirty years of running away from his Muslim religion, his religion caught up with him. His good friend Amolac later tells him, "You realize what this means, don't you? It means America isn't ours anymore." Manzoor, recalling that bitter moment, writes, "I said nothing, but I understood."

After the London subway bombings of July 7, 2005, Manzoor's Islamic religious beliefs are further tested. Four British Muslims, three of them of Pakistani origin, carried out the first ever British domestic suicide mission. Drawing inspiration from Springsteen's "Worlds Apart" from *The Rising* and relying on his own maturing process, he bravely responds to this test of faith. "Worlds Apart" features Pakistani-Muslim qawwali singer, Rachat Ali Kahn, and in listening to it, an epiphany Manzoor describes as "an intensely emotional experience," he draws saving hope that the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world can exist together. His own mature reflection culminates in the conclusion that what the Muslim bombers did in Britain was not in his name. Realizing there are more ways than one to be a good Muslim, Manzoor elects to believe in "an Islam which was much more tolerant."

The author's quest and his book end on a hopeful note as he openly embraces his Muslim faith and discovers his real promised land, Great Britain. And even this discovery he attributes at least in part to the Jersey musician, writing, "Bruce Springsteen changed my life because in his music I saw the promise of hope and escape and self-improvement, but where once I longed to escape to the United States, these days I am convinced my father did the right thing coming to Britain."

And then in the words of a man at peace with himself, Manzoor adds: "It has taken me three decades to realize there is only one country that is truly mine. The life my father had built, the family he had raised, and the life I have fashioned are all due to living in Britain. Every opportunity, every job and every chance I have had to pursue my dreams has been offered by this country, not by America, not by Pakistan. My father used to tell me he regretted coming to Britain, but in truth, it was the greatest gift he gave his children. I was born in Pakistan but made in England; it is Britain which is my land of hope and dreams." Evidently, there are more ways than one to be a good Springsteen fan.

John Massaro is SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor at SUNY Potsdam where he teaches a course exclusively dealing with Springsteen's music, "Political Themes in Springsteen." An earlier version of this review appeared in a different form at SpikeMagazine.com

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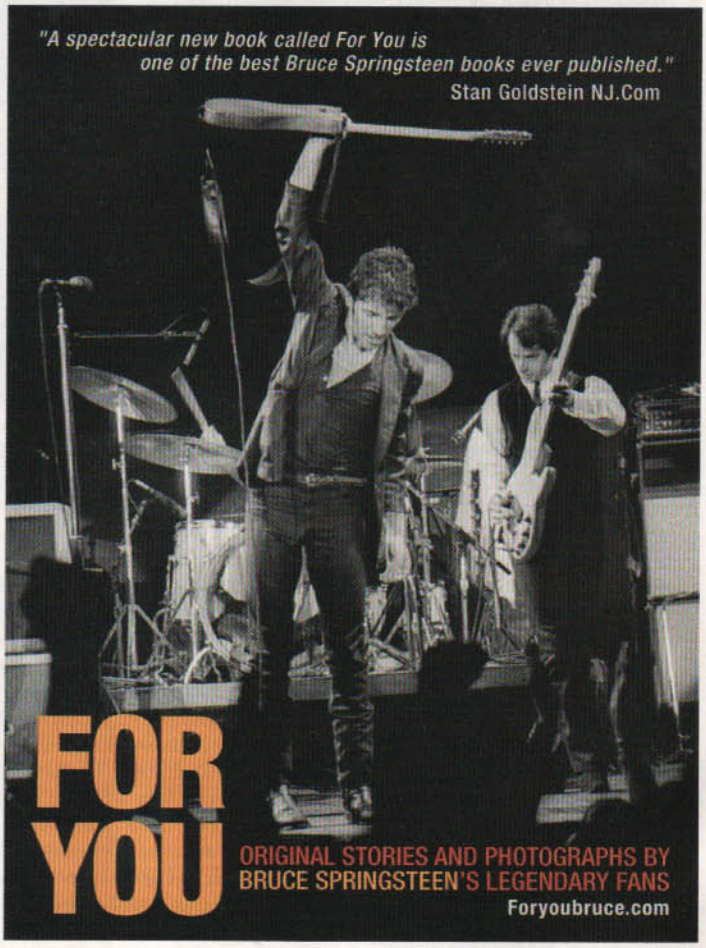

FOR YOU

ORIGINAL STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN'S LEGENDARY FANS

Foryoubruce.com

THE BOOKS

From photography to philosophy

The Many Faces of Bruce

By John Howie, Jr.

As always during a high-profile Springsteen period, a variety of new Bruce-related books are going to be vying for room on your shelves. They run the gamut from the photographic to the spiritual and represent Springsteen's continuing influence on popular culture, suitable for everything from the lawn chair to the academic chair.

Lawrence Kirsch's **FOR YOU** has been a particularly hot item since its fall release, and for good reason: along with the first-person fan stories—we've all got 'em, we love to hear 'em—this handsome, hardback volume is stuffed with color and black & white photos from the early 1970s all the way up to the E Street Band's *Magic*-promoting appearance on the *Today* show in 2007. The 1978 cover shot of Bruce and Garry Tallent would be worth the price of admission alone, but when you factor in the international tales of fandom (sometimes written in the speaker's native, non-English tongue), and all the great pics, you've got hours of enjoyment at your fingertips. One of my personal faves comes from longtime Springsteen-ite Harold Dean Beverley, who relates his tale of conversion—he even uses the term "saved"—like it happened just the other night. Upon viewing a seated Beverley in the front row of a 1974 gig in Norfolk, Virginia, Bruce jumped on his chair and shouted, *"Rock, you son of a bitch!"* That's just one of the many life-changing stories here, with era-appropriate photos on every page. *For You* has been printed in a limited run, so get it while you can.

Also new to the photography section is a revised edition of Chuck Yopp's **GREETINGS FROM ASBURY PARK, NJ: A LOOK AT THE LOCAL SCENE**, a paperback collection of black & white snapshots originally published in 1983. The captioned images range from regional landmarks like the "E St." sign, to pictures of Bruce on stage with folks like Brian Setzer and former New York Doll David Johansen in the early '80s. Author Yopp told *Backstreets* that he started working on the book in 1974 when he "worked at a suitcase warehouse... our storage space was the Upstage Club!" The book does have an endearing familiarity, like looking through the photo album of a there-when-it-happened friend who cared enough to document it. Most of these photos are unavailable elsewhere, and original copies of the book have been circulating for astronomical prices, so Yopp's return after 25 years is a boon for fans and collectors. This new pressing of *Greetings* is available in two different covers, recreating the original first and second editions.

The early summer months bring the arrival of two new books that examine Bruce from the perspective of higher learning—and a higher power. In June, author Jeffrey B. Symynkywicz expounds on **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**, the latest in Westminster John Knox Press's *The Gospel According to...* series. The author, a Unitarian minister and long-time Springsteen fan, devotes a chapter to each of Bruce's studio albums—right on up through *Magic*—looking at them from a universally spiritual standpoint and examining recurring themes like redemption, faith, and hope. The author himself puts it best when he says, "Springsteen calls upon us to keep faith with the oppressed and marginalized wherever they may cross our paths." Amen, brother!

In May, Springsteen joins the esteemed ranks of *The Simpsons*, Woody Allen, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as the subject of a book in Open Court Publishing's "Popular Culture and Philosophy" series. **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND PHILOSOPHY: DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TRUTH** looks at the Boss and his music through the eyes of 14 contemporary philosophers, who also just happen to be hardcore Springsteen fans. The chapters examine Springsteen's connection with everything from Marx, fatalism, and feminism, to more well-traveled subjects like the omnipresent theme of cars and driving in Bruce's lyrics.

Speaking of philosophies, Springsteen found time during the *Magic* season to lend his own voice to the support of two books that should find favor with folks who walk on Bruce's side of the ideological fence. **THE MAN WHO HATED WORK AND LOVED LABOR: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF TONY MAZZOCCHI** by Les Leopold, is an enthralling look into the life of a labor leader who, in Bruce's words, "spent his life fighting to protect workers like those who lost their jobs in my hometown." Author Leopold tells *Backstreets*, "Mazzocchi's work and Bruce connected when the 3M facility, (which was represented by Mazzocchi's union) shut down in Freehold, NJ. A major battle erupted, and Bruce came in to support the workers in a campaign designed in large part by Mazzocchi."

Springsteen also stepped up to support the new book by one of his earliest flag wavers in the media, Greg Mitchell. Mitchell, one of the editors of the legendary rock mag *Crawdaddy!* back in the '70s, wrote a groundbreaking Springsteen piece in 1973 (that has since appeared in the *Racing in the Street* anthology) called, "Who is Bruce Springsteen and Why Are We Saying All These Nice Things About Him?" Now, Springsteen has returned the favor by writing a brief preface to Mitchell's new book, **SO WRONG FOR SO LONG: HOW THE PRESS, THE PUNDITS—AND THE PRESIDENT—FAILED ON IRAQ**. Bruce's foreword, titled, "Tell the Truth From Lies," says that the book "goes a long way toward correcting some of the misconceptions that the media haven't been ready to deal with," in terms of American involvement in Iraq. These days Mitchell is the editor of *Editor and Publisher*, a monthly journal covering the North American newspaper industry, and *So Wrong* expands on several articles he wrote for the online version of the magazine on the media's role in the post-9/11 political climate.

Lastly, on the subject of the world after 9/11, *A Race of Singers* author Bryan Garman—also a *Backstreets* contributor (see his Seeger Sessions piece in *Backstreets* #85)—contributes an entire chapter on Springsteen and *The Rising* to a new collection of essays simply entitled **MUSIC IN THE POST 9/11 WORLD**. As the title suggests, the book focuses on the role that musical expression and commentary have played in popular culture since the tragedy, as well as the effect the political arena has had on music itself.

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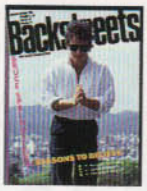

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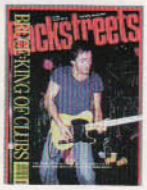

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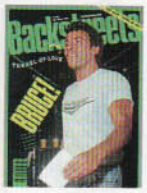

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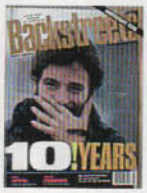

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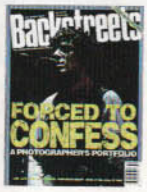

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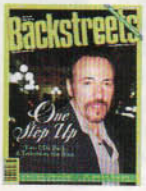

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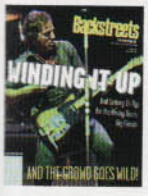

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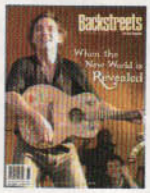

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Bruce praises "power pop masters"

Return of the Raspberries

By Marvin Matthews

In 2005, on his *Devils & Dust* tour, there were several nights when Springsteen took a moment to plug a favorite band and dedicate a song to them—though strangely, it was a band that had broken up three decades earlier. "I had this white Ford pickup, and it had a cassette player—there weren't any CDs at the time," Bruce would tell the crowd. "I kept this cassette of the Raspberries' *Greatest Hits* in there. They've still yet to get any respect, the Raspberries... but why? I don't know, because all the power pop and the guitars... they wrote a bunch of great songs, and they had an especially great record called 'Overnight Sensation,' which was a classic, a beautiful pop record. If you haven't heard it, go get 'Overnight Sensation.' I guarantee—if not, next time you can say 'Bruce, your taste sucks,' or whatever—it's a great record."

Two years later, 2007 brought the release of *Raspberries Live on Sunset Strip* (Rykodisc), the first new album in more than 30 years by this quintessential power pop band. The new CD and accompanying DVD were taken from a performance at the House of Blues club in Los Angeles in October 2005. As Bruce suggested, it's a band that for the most part has also been ignored by the music-listening masses since their heyday, if loved by most critics. Fittingly, the Raspberries' re-emergence was proclaimed by none other than

Reunited in Cleveland, December 31, 2004.

GENE TAYLOR PHOTO

Springsteen himself, referencing that pickup truck cassette player once again in his liner notes for the new live album:

In the late '70s I'd drive on Sunday nights to Asbury Park to sit in with Southside Johnny with The Raspberries Greatest Hits *firmly stuck in the cassette player of my C-10 pickup. Dismissed at the time of their chart dominance for having "hits" (Fools!), they are THE great underrated power pop masters. Their best records are as fun and sound as fresh today as when they were released. Soaring choruses, Beach Boys harmonies over crunchy Who guitars, lyrics simultaneously innocent, lascivious, and all about sex, sex, sex continue to make an unbeatable combination. "Go All The Way," "I Wanna Be With You," "Let's Pretend," "Tonight," all still deliver on their three minutes of promised ecstasy, while "Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)" still raises the hair on your arms and should go down as one of the great mini-rock opera masterpieces of all time...."*

Unfortunately, sometimes rock 'n' roll is just not fair. All things being equal, Cleveland's Raspberries would have taken the pop/rock crown lying in wait after the Beatles' demise. For their fans, they were the closest thing to "America's Beatles." They were "power pop" before the label was coined, and before it was anointed upon the likes of Big Star, Cheap Trick, the Knack, and others. During their brief chart life, between 1971 and 1974, Raspberries (Eric Carmen: lead vocals/rhythm guitar/keyboards; Wally Bryson: lead guitar/vocals; Dave Smalley: bass/vocals; Jim Bonfanti: drums/vocals, plus later members Mike McBride: drums/vocals and Scott McCarl: bass/vocals), combined a keen melodic sense with explosive musicianship. Mixing the best of the U.K. pop/rock bands of the 1960s with a dash of American rock 'n' roll, they forged a sound that was altogether unique. Although their success on the Top 40 charts was measured only by "Go All the Way," "I Wanna Be With You," "Let's Pretend," and "Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)," this was not indicative of their imprint on the musical landscape, which was permanent.

In 1972, FM radio was populated by the likes of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Alice Cooper, while AM radio had Roberta Flack's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" mixing with "Brandy" by Looking Glass. Somewhere between the two airwaves, radio listeners were treated to "Go All the Way"—an explosion of Beatles meets Brian Wilson meets Pete Townshend—a sound that was hip enough for FM, with a melody rooted in AM. It was unlike anything else on the radio, and it foreshadowed Raspberries' future: a musical dichotomy, confusing the heck out of Capitol Records, radio station programmers, and listeners. What slot did they fit into? They had the boyish good looks to appeal to the teen magazine readers, but they could certainly rock, so, who exactly were they?

Raspberries were a band that truly had it all: the songs, the talent, and the looks. The rhythm section, featuring Bonfanti's powerful drumming and Smalley's tuneful bass-playing, was uplifting. Carmen's exhilarating lead vocals alongside Bryson's phenomenal guitar playing gave the band a stage presence that could rival Jagger/Richards or Daltrey/Townshend. With songs such as Bryson's Free-styled "Party's Over," the country-rock

The original Raspberries line-up in 1973

The new milennium Raspberries, clockwise around Steve Van Zandt from left: Paul Sidotti (guitar, keys, vocals), Jim Bonfanti (drums), Derek Braunschweiger (percussion), Wally Bryson (guitar, vocals), Eric Carmen (vocals, keys, guitar), Dave Smalley (bass, vocals), Billy Sullivan (guitar, mandolin, vocals), Jennifer Lee (vocals, keys).

of Smalley's "Should I Wait," and Carmen's Small Faces-esque "Tonight," the band had three talented songwriters and an ability to write in diverse styles. Other bands tried to follow a similar template, but Raspberries had the secret locked away.

So what happened? Start with a mixture of bad timing, literally being in the right place at the wrong time, follow that up with music that could not be pigeon-holed, and a general music-listening populace that failed to take notice of the greatness of the band. When their last release—the ironically-titled *Starting Over* from 1974 (exit Bonfanti and Smalley, enter McBride and McCarl)—failed to hit, the inevitable internal dissension set in and the band broke up, all while the album and its single "Overnight Sensation" were being picked by many music publications, including *Rolling Stone*, as among the year's top releases. Eventually the members moved onto other projects with varied success—Carmen hitting the charts with songs such as the pop music staple "All By Myself," Bryson joining ex-Rascals Gene Cornish and Dino Danelli in Fotomaker—but for all intents and purposes, Raspberries' fate had been sealed.

Raspberries and Bruce Springsteen arrived at basically the same time in the early 1970s. Similar to the music of Springsteen, Raspberries were a band that you either "got" or you didn't. Whereas Springsteen persisted until he broke through to the mainstream, Raspberries never got to that point. Though the fans of Raspberries seemed to be few and far between, as the years passed the band's status and influence grew, and more and more people seemed to get it. Then, after 30-plus years of lying in dormancy, the band and its original members reunited in November 2004 for a show in Cleveland, followed by selected shows through 2005, all to rave reviews.

Springsteen's recent praise for the band doesn't come as a surprise. It is fairly well known that during the recording of *The River*, he was making a conscious effort to write in a pop vein. He and Steve Van Zandt listened to Raspberries during the post-*Darkness on the Edge of Town* pre-*River* days, as Springsteen told MOJO magazine in a 1998 interview: "I'd come off *Darkness* and felt I'd really found the characters and the type of writing that I wanted to do. But one of my favorite records that summer was *The Raspberries' Greatest Hits:* they were great little pop records, I loved the production, and when I went into the studio a lot of things we did were like that. Two-, three-, four-minute pop songs coming one right after another...."

In the lyrics of the song "No Surrender," Springsteen sings: "We learned more from a three-minute record than we ever did in school." Just which "three minute record" Springsteen might be referring to is unknown, but as he mentioned, Raspberries could certainly lay claim to some of the best of them. And coincidentally, two songs that came out of his late-'70s sessions, "I Wanna Be With You" and "I'm A Rocker," had identical titles to Raspberries songs.

Van Zandt, who caught the reunited Raspberries at B.B. King's in New York on July 23, 2005, echoed Springsteen's sentiments: "On *The River*, we were very consciously making classic rock/pop songs in the flavor of what Raspberries were doing. Songs like 'Don't Look Back,' 'Mary Lou,' 'Be True,' 'Where the Bands Are,' and 'Out in the Street,' you can hear the Raspberries influence on that album, and some of the outtakes from that wound up on the second CD of the *Tracks* collection."

In *Raspberries Tonight!*, Bernie Hogya and Ken Sharp's book about the Raspberries' reunion tour, Van Zandt recalled the 2005 New York show: "They were just terrific at B.B. King's. It was good to see them back together. It all begins with the songs. The Raspberries' songs are great. The songs that knocked me out then were the same ones that I like today. 'Tonight' is still my favorite. You can hear the Small Faces on that, and you can hear a bit of Steve Marriott in Eric's voice, plus the Who and the Kinks and a bit of the Beatles."

Steve added that Raspberries never got the respect that they deserved because "it was too soon after the Beatles. We sort of half-liked them when they came out, but at the same time it sort of felt like it wasn't cool to like them. By the '80s, you could have some perspective looking back, and once you had some distance from it, you saw how good they really were."

Now after 30 years, could the world finally be ready for Raspberries? The new live CD, produced by Carmen and Mark Linett (a producer/engineer known for his work with Brian Wilson and Beach Boys remasters), finally presents the band's music in the way that it was always meant to be heard, practically exploding out of your speakers. Take "Go All the Way": in 1972, as great a song as it was, it sounded sonically empty, and later releases on CD did nothing to enhance the sound. Now in its live reincarnation, the song's bottom end is propelled to the front line, giving it the kick and drive that it has always lacked. The band's performance captured in concert is nothing short of spell-binding. The set also features a tip of the cap to two influences of their own, via cover versions of the Who's "I Can't Explain" and the Searchers' "Needles and Pins."

The "Deluxe Edition" of *Raspberries Live on Sunset Strip* features 21 songs featured on two CDs, plus a five-song DVD; an abridged 13-song CD "Standard Edition" is also available, and a limited "Special Collector's Edition" is sold only through the band's website.

For more information, visit the official site at raspberriesonline.com.

HIT RECORD
Carmen on Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen totally gets it. When I listened to the *Born to Run* album (which I did, by the way, during the time that I was writing the *Boats Against the Current* album, almost every night), it did everything for me that a great record should do. It drew me in, it made me smile, it made me think, it gave me chills, it inspired me. Those were brilliant songs, movingly performed.

Go back and listen to "Jungleland" and "She's the One" and "Born to Run." Then listen to "Overnight Sensation" and "I Wanna Be With You" and "Starting Over" and some of the stuff on *The River*. In my conversations with people over the years, I've come to realize that New Jersey "got" the Raspberries, perhaps more than anyplace else. Bruce is a brilliant artist who deserves every bit of his success. I can't think of anyone else I would have rather had write those liner notes.

—Originally posted on www.ericcarmen.com

On the set of the "Broken Radio" video. Photograph by Danny Clinch.

THE INTERVIEW

Bruce tunes in to Malin's "Broken Radio"

The Gutter Twins

By Lisa Iannucci

As a teenager, Jesse Malin never dreamed he'd someday be in a position where he could call up Bruce Springsteen and ask him to appear on his new record. But after several appearances onstage with his new friend and a backstage chat here and there, he felt comfortable enough to send him a song. The original plan was for Bruce to perhaps contribute a guitar track and some backing vocals, but after giving it some more thought, Jesse decided that the song in question, "Broken Radio," needed to be a duet. He took the unusual step of sending Springsteen the demo recording with a letter and the lyrics, explaining his reasoning. He didn't hear back for a while and thought maybe Bruce didn't like the song, but one day while he was in Los Angeles, doing preliminary work on *Glitter in the Gutter*, Jesse got the phone call he'd been hoping for. The two not only recorded the song together but later filmed a video with Danny Clinch at the helm.

Malin sat down with *Backstreets* prior to the start of his 2007 U.S. tour at Asbury Park's Stone Pony. "I had this song that was a personal thing," he said. "'Broken Radio' was about my mom, who passed away in my late teens. She was a waitress but she was really a frustrated singer. If a good song came on the radio she'd sing along in the car, and those three or four minutes was kind of like her liberation, would get her through the day. And so to have Bruce respond so positively was really great. He said 'come on down to the house,' and I went down there, and he came riding up on his motorcycle... and he was just great.

I find it interesting that you chose "Broken Radio" for Bruce, because it's a song about your mom, and when you met him in 2003 and appeared with him at his Christmas show, you requested a song about his mother, "The Wish."

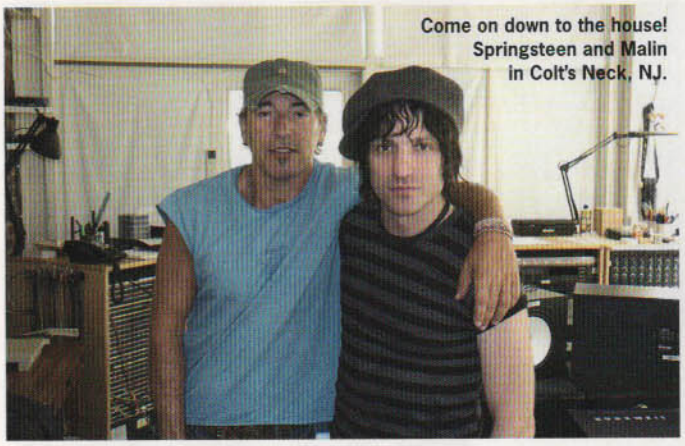
You know, I never thought of that, but yeah. Whether people are listening [to the radio anymore] or not I don't know, but people are finding their music in a different way. And a song like "Broken Radio" to me is just about that change. The song is written about a person who listened to the radio and it was a real force, a real thing. How people find music now, I don't fully understand it at this point. It's changing a lot. But "Broken Radio" is about when they find it, how it impacts them, and what it can do—what it's done for me and for the people I know.

And now the song has been released as the second single from your record, complete with video!

Labels love marketing stuff like that. I called him up and told him it was the label's idea and I didn't want to exploit him or anything—I thought he needed to know. But it was okay, he was fine with it.

Talking to you in December of 2003, you seemed to think the holiday shows would be the end of your musical collaboration with Bruce. What changed?

We stayed in touch. I went to see him up in Massachusetts during the Seeger Sessions tour and he said, "Something comes up, I'd love to be part of it." That was really it, and after waiting three years to make a new record, it seemed like the right time.



Come on down to the house! Springsteen and Malin in Colt's Neck, NJ.

HARRY GREENBERGER PHOTO

You've always been a part of the New York scene, but in the last couple of years you've really found a niche for yourself on the Jersey Shore scene, too.

Yeah, you know, we've been down here before, but this is the first time we've sold this many tickets [at the Stone Pony]. And of course, Bob Benjamin and Light of Day have been really great.

You appeared at that Music For Youth benefit at Carnegie Hall, for which each participant was asked to perform a Springsteen song. How did that go?

It was just amazing to be in Carnegie Hall again, but to have all your friends and a lot of peers—bands that I love as people, bands that I respect as artists, people who have been making records for 10, 15, 20 years like Steve Earle and Patti Smith, to some of my new favorite artists like Pete Yorn, The Hold Steady, M. Ward, The Low Stars.... I mean, the bill was just such a great bill. And being a fan of Bruce and all of those people, digging Bruce's music, it was just such a great group of people put together. [Organizer] Michael Dorf did such a good job—and then for Bruce to actually show up!

And I just thought everybody's performance was so good. I had a bit of an interesting experience myself *[wry smile]*, but yeah, it was just great that we were able to invade, and that his music was able to open the doors and let in all these artists that I respect so much. People did great interpretations—he deserves that and much more, and I think he seemed to like it.

Speaking of The Hold Steady, how did you find them, and what has their reaction been to you covering their song ["You Can Make Him Like You"]?

I rehearse at a bar where they hang out, and the guy that owns the bar introduced us—he said, "This guy's been playing one of your songs." I think that they were pretty happy—I think they dig it, [guitarist] Tad [Kubler] thanked me for playing it, and I said, "Hey, thanks for writing it." I've been doing it almost every night.

If I do a song, I always like to try to find my own version of it, or it feels like karaoke. And I love covering stuff, whether it's an old Jim Croce song or a Kills song. I don't like that many new things, and when I went through that [Hold Steady] record, that song just jumped out. I thought they did a great "Atlantic City" [at Carnegie Hall]—I thought they stole the show.

What has Bruce's response been to your record? Have you heard anything?

I know he likes the song. You know, we did the video, and he seemed to have a good time. We had a great day [filming] with Danny Clinch, and us with acoustic guitars, and we lip-synched—but then we really didn't because we were singing along. Yeah, I think he seemed to really like the song, but I haven't really held a gun to his head and asked him.

Malin's follow-up to Glitter in the Gutter, *a covers record titled* On Your Sleeve *(and featuring songs by the Hold Steady, Jim Croce, and the Kills), has just been released on One Little Indian.*

"Bruce meets the East Village"

Maybe Pete's Pure Rock 'n' Roll

By Lisa Iannucci

For those of you who don't already know it, the next big thing down here on the Shore is a North Jersey-based band called Maybe Pete. What they do is not particularly daring or radical—in fact, their influences are fairly obvious—but if you can't stand what's on the radio, are tired of the hyper-marketed "indie" rock aimed at the youngsters but love a well-crafted song and some loud guitars, this is the band for you.

Husband-and-wife team Frankie and Kelly McGrath head up this outfit, and their repertoire is chock full of hook-laden original material, much of which can be found on their 2005 independent release, *From the City to the Stratosphere*. With a rock-solid rhythm section featuring Johnny Macko on drums and Keith McCarthy on bass, this is truly a band that will satisfy your craving for rock music made the old-fashioned way: stinging guitar leads, a pounding backbeat, finely wrought lyrics and an intense vocal delivery that commands attention.

Frankie, known amongst his friends as an excellent mimic (his Little Steven as Silvio Dante imitation will have you doubled over laughing), is captivating onstage. He delivers powerful moments of vocal drama interspersed with caustic, self-deprecating asides or the odd one-liner, while Kelly plays the perfect foil, her unassuming demeanor the perfect counterpart to her spouse's onstage antics. They have a small but devoted following that shows up pretty much everywhere they play, and they are regulars at such Shore venues as Asbury Park's The Saint. The band spent much of 2007 in the studio, working on their second self-produced record, which they expect to release this summer.

Frankie is half Italian, fond of cigarettes, Sambuca, and cheap beer. He is well over six feet tall, with the lankiness of Joey Ramone, a thick North Jersey drawl, and a gravely singing voice that echoes a certain other Shore denizen. Kelly, Irish to the core, has a face full of freckles and a ready smile. She plays a pink DiPinto electric guitar as well as the mandolin, and she co-writes the band's material. In addition to their passion for rock 'n' roll, the McGraths also share a love of baseball, red wine, and the Rolling Stones. High school sweethearts, their favorite hang-out spots when not at a show include Coney Island's soon-to-be-razed Astroland amusement park and nearby Keyspan Park, where they take in the occasional Brooklyn Cyclones game.

Mr. & Mrs. McGrath

A.M. SADDLER PHOTO

Asked to describe the band's sound, Kelly says, "Someone once described us as Bruce Springsteen meets the East Village, and I'm comfortable with that."

"Our sound is a product of our environment," adds Frankie. "I think we definitely sound like a Northern Jersey band, like a cross between the Jersey Shore and New York City."

The McGraths are strong supporters of the New York/New Jersey live music scene, as is drummer Macko, and the three of them can often be found hanging at the (now closed) Wonder Bar or the Stone Pony taking in the sights. They have participated in numerous local benefits, too, including several appearances at Bob Benjamin's Light of Day event. It's a tight-knit group of musicians here at the Shore, and the McGraths are well thought of by their peers.

"What I love most about Maybe Pete is their pure rock 'n' roll sound," says Lou Montesano, lead singer/guitarist for Shore favorites Status Green. "Even though they reside in North Jersey, they are recognized in the Asbury music community as one of its most important contributors to the scene. You really can't find a nicer group of people."

"The Jersey Shore scene represents a lot of what we were raised on, and it's really an honor to come down here and play in Asbury Park," says Frankie. "And I think the scene is really much more nurturing down here than a lot of other places. Asbury Park gives you a chance to develop as a band. If they like what you're doing, they'll give you helpful hints, try to build up a following. As opposed to New York or Hoboken, where that type of attitude seems to have gone away in the last couple of years. Like, if the place isn't packed, you're not going to play there again. Asbury gives you a chance to grow, which is cool."

Kelly adds, "Another thing that we've noticed too is that like in Hoboken or New York, you'll see them put five bands on the bill that make no sense together, where like down here at The Saint or The Pony or whatever, they try to put bands on the bill that go well together."

Even after all the hours they have spent playing on the Shore, they are still awed by its history. "It never really gets old," says Kelly. "Every time we walk on the stage at the Stone Pony, it crosses my mind. It's like I'm walking in the footsteps of greatness. You think of it every time."

"We had Bobby [Bandiera] onstage with us at the Pony," Frankie adds, "and I gotta say, it's still kind of surreal that I'm playing with people I was going to see when I was like 16 years old. It's kind of mind-boggling."

You can occasionally catch the ubiquitous Tony "Boccigalupe" Amato sitting in on keyboards if you see Maybe Pete enough times. Frankie does a mean imitation of Mr. Amato, and the repartee between the two on such occasions is worth the price of admission.

Frankie and Kelly often cover their favorite artists as part of their live show—one might hear Replacements, Ramones, Neil Young, or Mr. Springsteen on any given night. Their influences also include—somewhat surprisingly—'80s stalwarts The Alarm. "I think The Alarm played with total working-band, punk rock energy, and it was like the ultimate marriage of the two. It was like punk rock mixed with the E Street Band—which, in my brain, is just kind of perfect," says Frankie.

"They played every show like it was their last," adds Kelly, "and there's just not that many people who do it well."

Count Maybe Pete in that company—this is live music the way it's supposed to be. And though they humbly scoff at such notions, the Maybe Pete folks are in truth a sublimely entertaining and tight-knit bunch that really will make you rekindle your belief in rock 'n' roll.

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IN MEMORIAM

Terry Magovern is Terry Magovern

Breaking the Mold

By Robert Santelli

"Hands me the ticket, smiles and whispers good luck..." Magovern and Springsteen on stage in 1988.

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

There isn't much humility in pop music, not with egos as large as planets and with fan worship and media attention that could push even the most well-balanced artist over the edge. I'm not just talking about stars, either. Band members, sidemen, managers, publicists, roadies, assistants, even chauffeurs and cooks can—and often do—become afflicted with a bad of case self-importance in the crazy world of rock 'n' roll. A backstage stroll at any concert, in any city, on any tour, will attest to this quite nicely.

However, there was one person that beautifully defied pop music arrogance and abuse of power, who, in fact, represented their exact opposites. Terry Magovern threw hubris out the window. A teddy bear of a person, a man of immense character, quiet strength, warm compassion, unquestioned loyalty and undeniable love, Terry Magovern was all of these. He also happened to be Bruce Springsteen's longtime personal assistant—a role he could have used to great personal effect, but never did—and one of the great unsung heroes of Jersey Shore rock 'n' roll. Magovern, 67, passed away last summer. His death gets added to a music scene loss list that includes Bill Chinnock, Bobby Alfano, and Big Danny Gallagher.

Magovern wasn't a musician. But in a way he was more important than one. He created the foundation from which musicians built their careers. He provided friendship and support. He was a fan. He protected you. He cared. He was, when you got right down to it, a damn good man, a person you were privileged to have on your side.

Just ask Bruce. Their relationship had no seams, no walls, no fuss. Where Bruce was, well, that's where Terry was. His official job was probably "personal assistant." His unofficial job description was "to be everything to everyone." Bruce was once asked about the role Terry Magovern played in his organization. He replied, "Terry Magovern is Terry Magovern."

I was fortunate to know Terry Magovern a long time. I first came across him at a bar in my hometown, Point Pleasant Beach, where Terry was the bouncer in the early 1970s. During the winter months after the summer tourists had returned to New York and North Jersey, the Rip Tide ran a Sunday afternoon special: "Five Beers for a Dollar." The place would be packed with fishermen, surfers, boardwalk hustlers, and drunks.

With all that beer and testosterone, fists were always ready to fly. However, if you were thinking of pounding someone, you had to deal with Terry Magovern, a gentle giant with a heavyweight fighter's glare and a former U.S. Navy diver trained in Special Warfare and underwater demolition. Not surprisingly, the Rip Tide was one of the best-behaved bars at the Shore, despite all that fast-flowing beer. Its owners could thank Terry Magovern for that, and so could people like me.

Continued next page

While Magovern was managing another Jersey Shore club, the Captain's Garter, in Neptune, he hired a certain local band—even though the Garter was Top 40 territory, a cover band joint filled with people who wanted to hear familiar hits, not unknown soul-rock originals. The band Magovern hired was the Bruce Springsteen Band, a precursor to the E Street Band, but back then, a group struggling to stay alive and play anywhere it could. Some years later, I asked Terry why he hired the Bruce Springsteen Band, knowing full well it wouldn't work. "They were good," he said, wondering why I'd even have to ask. "I believed in what they were trying to do with the music. And I liked the lead guy."

Magovern managed and/or bounced at plenty of other bars at the Shore. In the early '80s, E Street Band saxophonist Clarence Clemons opened a club, Big Man's West, in Red Bank, and asked Magovern to run it, which he did. It quickly rivaled the Stone Pony in nearby Asbury Park as the hot music club at the Shore. Big Man's didn't last, in part because the owner seemed to care more about the music than the bottom line. It was then that Springsteen asked Magovern to work for him. They'd been together until Magovern took that final exit off the Garden State Parkway and headed for rock 'n' roll heaven.

Two nights before Magovern passed away, I had dinner with him and mutual friends, Eileen and Tommy Chapman. Some months before, Terry had asked me for a signed copy of my book, *Greetings from E Street*, which, because of living on the West Coast these days, I hadn't taken care of. That night I looked forward to giving it to him in person because I had written in it how I felt, not only about his friendship, but also the role he had played in the lives of so many Jersey Shore musicians, Springsteen included. He thanked me, we had a great Italian dinner, and when we were done, he told me that he'd see me on the road somewhere since the E Street Band was gearing up for another tour.

That meeting never happened. The Jersey Shore music community was dramatically affected by Terry Magovern's passing. Springsteen showed great emotional strength, but inside you knew he was grieving badly. He gave the eulogy at Magovern's funeral, but what he really thought about his longtime sidekick can be heard in the last song on *Magic*. It's not listed in the song credits. Wait for it to come around on the last track of the CD and listen closely to it. It's a song about friendship and love, respect and longing, and deep appreciation, and it has Terry Magovern's soul embedded into every note and lyric.

So Terry Magovern is gone. The Springsteen tour commenced without him, just the way Terry would have wanted it to. Of course, he is much missed.

Terry's 60th birthday party, in 2000.

Fact is, things will never be the same in the Springsteen camp without him. But there is a longing, a bit of a dream, really, that somehow you'll turn the corner backstage near the Boss's dressing room and find him there. I don't think that desire will ever go away, and I know that there are an awful lot of people who would agree with me.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEAN MAGOVERN

REMEMBERING TERRY MAGOVERN

Bruce Springsteen on "New Jersey's Catcher in the Rye"

I first met Terry in 1972. I'd just returned from California after an unsuccessful attempt to live as a musician in the Bay Area. Steve's band, the Sundance Blues Band, were booked at the Captain's Garter in Neptune, New Jersey. I sat in with Steve, and we played to a packed and cheering crowd. This was a job we needed, *bad*. I was broke. After the show, sweaty and triumphant, Steve and I went back to meet the manager of the place, figuring we were this guy's dream come true. There behind the desk, windbreaker on, stood a large and not very friendly light-haired man. He explained slowly and carefully, that yes, while the crowd was large and loud, that no one was drinking. They were too busy listening to the music, and if we hadn't noticed this was a bar, therefore, our services in the future would not be necessary. This was my first introduction to the clear, hard-headed thinking of Terry Magovern. He fired me! It was the beginning of a long and beautiful relationship.

Terry stood as a strange New Jersey version of "the catcher in the rye," out on the edge of some windswept cliff keeping children from rushing over the edge. He was always busy saving something or somebody. It was his blessing and his tragedy. It's no wonder some savvy commander spotted this in him and chose him for the Mercury Program, a frogman to pull astronauts out of the water after their lonely trip through space. It's no wonder that Terry's occupation of choice here on the Jersey Shore was lifeguard. His theme song should have been "You Gotta Serve Somebody." For "T" this idea seemed to include most of the human race with the exception of one...Terry Magovern. That was one rescue mission he was always underprepared for.

Terry and my 23 years together were marked by the quiet, slow, methodical rituals of two men comfortably alone together, doing a job. Over time that methodicalness evolved into something deeply personal. The small things: Terry's door open next to mine in every hotel of the past two decades; Terry in his best Ed McMahon voice as I stepped into the van at the end of each show saying "you have conquered another city, Oh Great One", me answering, "yes, we have," then silence for the rest of the ride home; the emptying of everything from my pockets into Terry's hands as I was about to go onstage; these are the things I'm going to miss.

Out of all of Terry's unusual qualities, the one that was least noticed but most deeply felt was his permanence. Everything about Terry spoke of permanence. This is why his death is so difficult to fathom. His size, his face, his gait, the tempo at which he met the world, all spoke of mastery over time, control of space, and permanence. I never saw Terry rush, though I'm sure I gave him occasion to. I never saw Terry panic, though one night we were in a very small plane in a very big wind and for 30 or 40 long seconds it appeared like the pilots were really not going to keep us in the air. My agent Barry Bell was there, and I watched as he renewed his faith in Judaism. A *New York Times* reporter was with us, his eyes rolled back into his head as if imagining tomorrow's headlines: "Bruce Springsteen and others...." Whatever I was doing, I'm sure it wasn't pretty. I turned to Terry and he was sitting extremely still, the mask of Irish fatalism fixed firmly to his face. We survived.

Encountering Terry was like coming across a huge rock formation in the desert: you could go around it, ignore it, climb over it—though that would be ill-advised—but you had to deal with its presence, its permanence. One evening I was concerned about a security issue. Terry assured me he was "the baddest man on the planet... for 60 seconds." Over the last few years watching Terry battle cancer, heart problems, the death of his fiancée Joan Dancy, you couldn't help but observe that those seconds had wound down to probably a very vicious "ten." Then they ran out.

Some people when they die take whole worlds with them. That's Terry Magovern. Terry was the last great symbol of the raging, honky-tonk, Jersey Shore scene of the '60s and '70s. Bar manager, bouncer, lifeguard, father, grandfather, loyal friend, faithful working companion, Terry covered it all. From Asbury Park to Timbuktu there are people weeping and wondering... *"How am I gonna get in?!!!"*

So here on E Street we say goodbye to our good friend, our New Jersey "catcher in the rye," and to the rest of you we say don't go rushing too hard towards the edge of that cliff. There's going to be two strong arms that aren't going to be there to catch you. Terry, when they built you, brother, they broke the mold.

Bruce Springsteen
August 20, 2007

Originally published at brucespringsteen.net. Reprinted with permission.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEAN MAGOVERN

With this year's Grammy Awards, a new light shone on Bruce Springsteen's 2007 recording of "Once Upon a Time in the West," his under-the-radar contribution to the **We All Love Ennio Morricone** tribute album. In addition to a pair of Grammys for the higher-profile "Radio Nowhere" (Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance and Best Rock Song), Bruce's guitar-driven revisitation of Morricone's great Western theme won the statue for "Best Rock Instrumental" on February 10. **Ermanno Labianca** examines exactly what there is to love about the great composer, the affinity between the Boss and the Maestro, and takes a look at what, exactly, is happening on Springsteen's Grammy-winning track.

ENNIO

Around the time that Bruce Springsteen was learning his way around the guitar, trying to pose like his heroes on TV, rock 'n' roll was in its golden age. The '50s had revealed what it was all about, the '60s were about to solidify the artform. America was the teacher, Europe was the student—at least, until the British discovered themselves ready to invade and conquer the promised land that Chuck Berry sang about. At first it was the Beatles, then, as years and fashions went by, it was the Kinks, the Yardbirds, the Faces and many more singing about Anna, Lola, Maggie Mae and others.

It became a whole land of a thousand dances, and songs. Everybody had their own. On the dance floor you could twist with Chubby Checker and Gary U.S. Bonds, on the beach you could surf with Brian Wilson and his boys, Otis Redding told everyone to shake. Every beat was irresistible. It only needed a bass and a drum, some guitar, maybe a little organ, and a great singer.

But what about the orchestra? That was part of the game, too, working sometimes for the rhythm, and sometimes for the heart. It could be essential when the Ronettes were singing "Be My Baby" under the eyes of Phil Spector, or absolutely moving when the string section was meant to touch your soul deeply. Can you imagine Ben E. King's "Stand by Me" without those magical 32 seconds when a little orchestra jumps in?

The various artists who covered that song respected that very moment created by an orchestra. John Lennon made sure that Spector himself was going to take care of that song when he cut it for his *Rock 'n' Roll* album. Willy DeVille did his best to sound as close as possible to the Drifters. And then along came Bono, when U2 decided to cover the song on stage in Philadelphia, inviting none other than the city's adopted son, Bruce Springsteen to share the microphone. The New Jersey boy was very familiar with that tune, as well as with boardwalks and rock 'n' roll harmony vocals. Bruce was, by then, already a graduate of the University of Rock 'n' Roll.

In Italy, Adriano Celentano debuted in 1957 out of Milan, shaking his pelvis like Elvis and moving his head like a new Jerry Lee. One of the most celebrated Italian rock 'n' roll pioneers, Celentano soon recorded a cover of "Stand By Me" that became "Pregherò" and still stands the test of time, after more than 40 years. Around the same time, in the mid-'60s, Edoardo Vianello, another guy whose fun, danceable tunes were all over the country's jukeboxes, recorded a nice, shaky little tune. 1964's "La Tremarella" stood next to other Vianello's tremendous twist, cha cha and surf hits like "Guarda come dondolo," "Abbronzatissima," and "I Watussi."

Behind all of this—and many, many more artists and bands that were shaping Italy's young rock 'n' roll and a new approach to music (Gianni Morandi, Rita Pavone, and Gino Paoli among them)—there was a small, quiet man, and a first-class arranger, who one day would conquer the world with his fine orchestrations and brilliant soundtracks: Ennio Morricone.

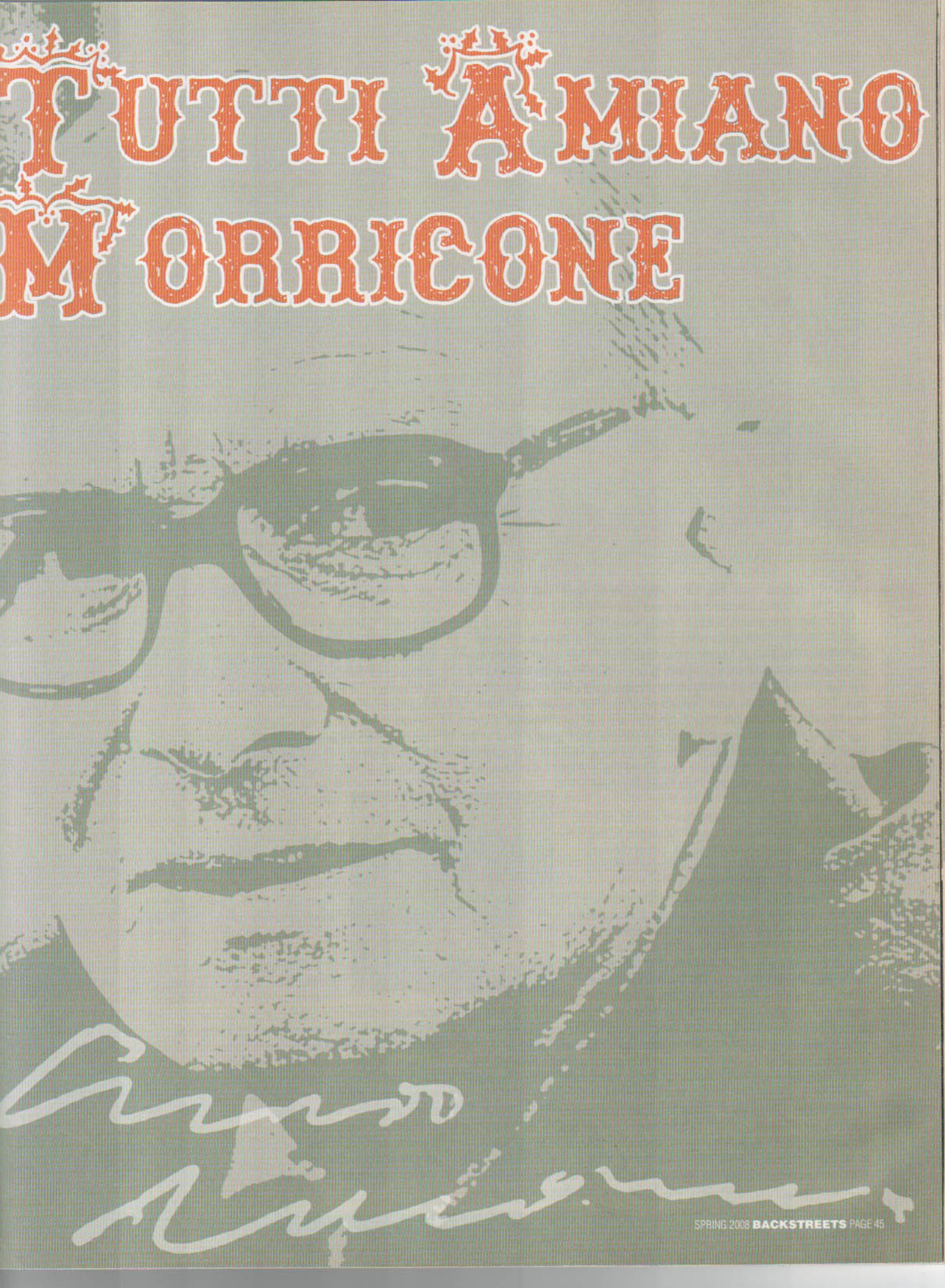
After making his mark on hundreds of pop songs, Morricone began forging a strong connection with the Italian movie system. 1965 was an important year: his soundtrack for Sergio Leone's *Per un pugno di dollari (A Fistful of Dollars)* gained him his first "Nastro d'argento" (Silver Ribbon), Italy's equivalent to the Academy Award. That was his first of a long string of successes in the Western movie genre. He and director Sergio Leone became something of a trademark couple. Italy had them on one side, and Federico Fellini with his musical partner Nino Rota on the other side. What was almost impossible with pop music went beyond any wildest dream in the movie system. Italy proudly became a role model, even though for budget reasons those fabulous Western movies were filmed in Morocco or Tunisia in order to recreate that unique landscape seen in dozen of John Wayne movies—or, for that matter, imagined in *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's timeless novel that turned into John Ford's epic movie, both tremendous influences for Bruce's "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

It was during Springsteen's *Tom Joad* tour, which brought him to Europe armed with only his acoustic guitars and harmonicas, that the Maestro (Mr. Morricone's nickname) and the Boss (well, do I have to say his name?) met for the first time.

It happened in Rome, as reported at the time in these pages [see "Once Upon a Time in Rome," *Backstreets* #56]. The two musicians showed each other much respect. While Morricone already had over 400 film scores to his name, Bruce Springsteen's quarter-century career was represented by a dozen albums; on the other hand, Springsteen had managed to capture an Academy Award, an honor which had somehow eluded Morricone. But in cases like this, such things are irrelevant. The body of work that these two artists had put together so far was coalescing. Bruce could thank the man responsible for soundtracks that strongly influenced him on his way from *The River* to *Tom Joad*. Morricone was able to better focus on the music of this "kid" that on his 1980-81 tour used to ask Roy Bittan to wonderfully introduce "Badlands" with a theme from *Once Upon a Time in the West*, another gem by *il Maestro*. When, during that night's performance in 1996, Springsteen's voice lifted to reach a falsetto note that reverberated throughout the quiet hall, I could spot Mr. Morricone a few seats from me enjoying those moments with a delighted expression.

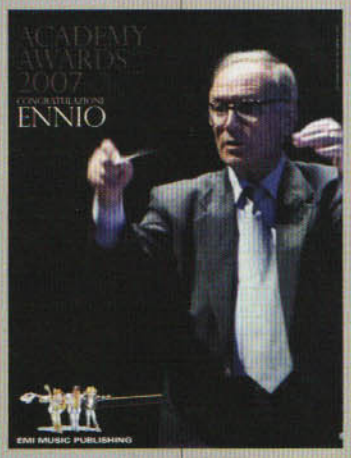
In 1999, Morricone didn't forget to wish a happy birthday to his new friend who was turning 50 the following day. He wrote a short piece that was published in *Il Messaggero*, Rome's historical newspaper, part of which reads in translation: "Bruce, I feel spiritually, politically, socially connected with you. You are a meaningful songwriter. I admire your guts, which to me comes from your roots, your fiery passion and your longstanding desire to make it and find yourself in this world. What I heard in Rome at your concert a few years ago was unbelievable. Loudspeakers, but no special effects, no technology. Your energy is always up front, but it never hides

TUTTI AMANO MORRICONE



the meaning of your songs, the big themes that people are interested in, today just as yesterday. Not only a rocker, but a tremendous pop artist, this is what you are. And I most admire artists that put the Truth above everything else."

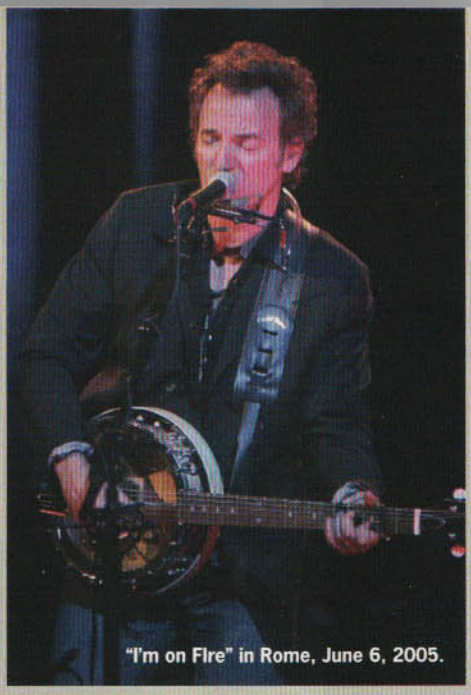
As a rocker, Springsteen had already entered the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. As a "tremendous pop artist," he received Morricone's blessing on September 22, 1999.



As many know, Spaghetti Westerns were not the only cup of tea for this musical genius who will turn 80 next November. Ennio Morricone has an immense following of music lovers across the globe. He has enhanced movies with a mixture of distinctive styles for the last 48 years, from mainstream films (like *Days of Heaven, Once Upon a Time in America, Frantic, The Untouchables, Bugsy, Hamlet, Casualties of War,* and *In the Line of Fire)* to small market ones, including Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso,* a movie that received an Academy Award in 1990 in the Best Foreign Film category. Along with Bernardo Bertolucci, Ettore Scola, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gillo Pontecorvo, Tornatore is among the many Italian directors who have been blessed by Morricone's musical touch. All of them know how important it is to walk side-by-side in a film project with such a talented musician. Some of them held an award, some of them have seen him holding it. He is a man who never seemed to work in order to receive anything but his satisfaction when the job is done. "The truth is that when you write music you don't think about awards," he has said, "you focus on the music."

Last year, however, the Maestro received quite an honor himself. Early in 2007, a congratulatory call came from the President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, with news of Morricone's first Oscar: the career-celebrating Honorary Academy Award "for his magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music."

After so much dedication to the making of countless unforgettable movie scores, Morricone would finally hold that statue he had previously been nominated for on a number of occasions. An Academy Award would soon be next to his Golden Globes (for *The Mission* in 1986 and *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano (The Legend of 1900)* in 1999), Grammys, and Baftas (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), and close to an acknowledgement received at Italy's Presidential Palace, all displayed in that huge apartment with a terrace that faces the monumental Roman Forum and the ancient Coliseum.


"I'm on Fire" in Rome, June 6, 2005.

GIOVANNI CANITANO PHOTO

If dreams came true, oh, wouldn't that be nice? I had a dream that one day Bruce Springsteen and Ennio Morricone would collaborate. I had it in Zurich, in 1981, when I heard a theme from *Once Upon a Time in the West* from Roy Bittan's grand piano before the E Street Band wildly launched into "Badlands." I had it again years later in Rome, when I could see how happy Bruce was to meet the Maestro for the first time, and how intensely Mr. Morricone watched him perform songs from *The Ghost of Tom Joad.* Springsteen's bitter epiphanies were "tales from the new West," modern tragedies that had a lot in common with the sad feelings you have after the closing scenes of *Once Upon a Time in the West,* as that seductive melody written for its finale sticks in your ears and in your heart. To me, *Tom Joad*'s "Across the Border" and Springsteen's somber acoustic approach to "The Promised Land" come straight from there.

But what if Springsteen and Morricone had met 20, 22 years earlier? What could have happened to that "Jungleland" strings intro and to the rest of the song if the two had made some decisions together? Okay, that's too much, even for a dreamer.

After hearing for years how influential Morricone has been for many pop and rock artists, it's now time for *We All Love Ennio Morricone.* And it's easy to love, because the tribute album holds together well, even if it showcases efforts from diverse artists such as Celine Dion and Metallica. The latter's version of "Ecstasy of Gold" (originally "La febbre dell'oro," from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly)* had been used for years as the intro to their high-power shows. Each artist brings his or her own style to the project, revealing how Morricone's appeal spills into every genre, while the Maestro himself wrote interstitial music to create transitions between the tracks, lending a flow and cohesion to make the whole even more appealing.

As with any tribute album, some renditions are *eccellenti* (a gang of talented stars—Quincy Jones, Herbie Hancock, Patti Austin—shine on "The Good, the Band, and the Ugly"), while some are *ovvie* (predictable). In terms of repertoire, while it is necessary to say that the producers likely have worked with an European audience as their target rather than an American one, what is really fascinating here is the chance to fly at once over all those scenarios seen in incredible movies by Sergio Leone, Roland Joffè and Giuseppe Tornatore. So thumbs-up for the selection of obscure gems like "Come Sail Away," from the Italian TV movie *Achille Lauro,* based on the true story of the dramatic 1985 hijacking of a cruise liner in the Mediterranean Sea. Soprano Renèe Fleming does her best on that piece of music; as does Brazilian singer Daniela Mercury, adding a new flavour to "Conmigo," a theme from *Metti una sera a cena,* one of the many Italian cult movies of the late '60s.

From those golden days comes "Once Upon a Time in the West," which now finally has its Bruce Springsteen treatment. While in Rome on the *Devils & Dust* tour in 2005, Bruce had a short meeting with Mr. Morricone, where he was told about the tribute project and invited to be a part of it. One might have expected Bruce to rework "The Man With the Harmonica" from that movie instead (that piece has a substantial electric guitar part), he instead chose to take his Telecaster to triumphantly dub "Jill's Theme" with a sense of respect and admiration that he always shows when he is paying homage to his true heroes (see him backing Roy Orbison on the *Black and White Night* DVD). While other guitar players would have surely showcased themselves, the Boss keeps a low profile and a light touch, not throwing in too many notes, no feedback, no effects.

It's a restraint that clearly demonstrates high regard for the material—the orchestral track is the original, recorded in 1968, orchestrated and conducted by Ennio Morricone at the RCA Studios in Rome. The tribute album's producers sent that track to New Jersey, so Springsteen could work on it by himself at home—just him in his Thrill Hill Studio, headphones on, following the Orchestra Unione Musicisti as conducted by the Maestro himself some 40 years ago. He sent his guitar part back, for editing and mixing at Rome's Forum Music Village, the studio where Morricone continues to cut his own material with orchestras.

Use your imagination and you can see Springsteen actually playing there, in the dark of the now-defunct RCA Studios of Rome, like he was part of that ensemble of fine musicians, not fronting it.

I am sure that's how he felt.

—Ermanno Labianca

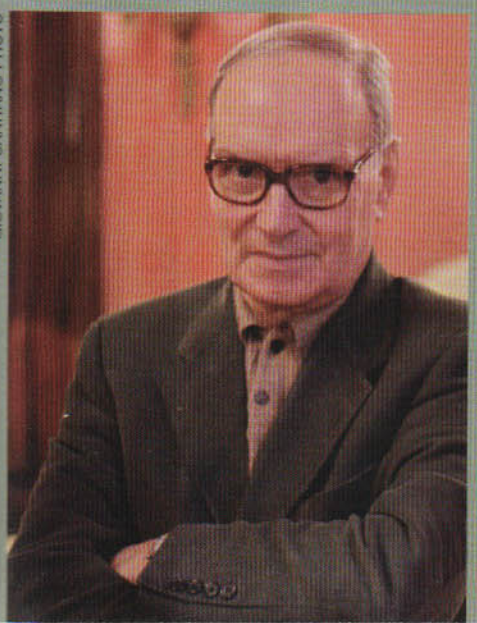
It has been said that the conductor and score writer had received numerous offers for steady work across the ocean. Many offered him wonderful villas on the Hollywood Hills to convince him to leave the Eternal City, but with no success. "The Mozart of Film Music," as British paper *The Guardian* titled a few years ago, is no easy person. (One night he went out to dinner with Bill Wyman but came home early. "Too boring," he said.) So they come to him. And when the *Devils & Dust* tour hit Rome in 2005, a banjitar-armed Bruce Springsteen opened the show with a touching, Western version of "I'm on Fire" dedicated to Morricone, who watched and listened with admiration from his second-row seat.

We All Love Ennio Morricone, released concurrent with the Academy Award, finds the man happy and relaxed, because he has seen it all. He already knew that Metallica was using his music in live shows. He obviously knew about Bruce Springsteen. The tribute album that honors him might seem to be an odd thing, to say the least, when you scan artist names and realize Celine Dion and Roger Waters are next to each other, with Metallica and Andrea Bocelli nearby. It doesn't bother the man who piled notes for 505 different movies.

There was only a moment when Morricone's solid body shook, just like those rock 'n' roll singles he arranged when Bruce Springsteen was a kid, dreaming about growin' up, imagining himself leading his own band. It was when producer Luigi Caiola called him to explain the tribute project that the Maestro promptly and laughingly judged "utopian and insane."

He soon changed his mind, saying, "yes, the stylistic discontinuity and its non-alignment are a great value." Then, to provide his own links between the songs, he did what he does best: he started making music.

Ermanno Labianca, who has been a Backstreets *contributor since 1986, lives and works in Rome. In addition to writing for TV, he regularly contributes to rock and pop encyclopedias and has authored numerous music books. Among these are Ben Harper's biography and several books on Bruce Springsteen, including Italian best sellers* American Skin *and* Real World. *He currently writes for the Italian edition of* Rolling Stone.

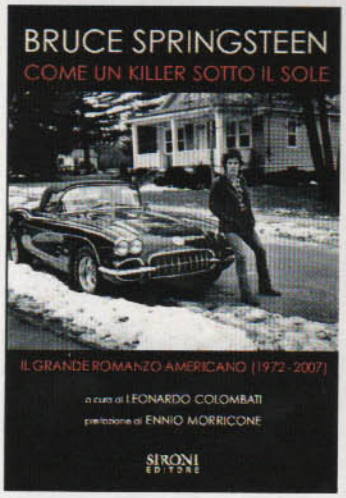


GIOVANNI CANITANO PHOTO

Bruce's Great American Novel

MORRICONE ON SPRINGSTEEN

By Ennio Morricone A foreword to Leonardo Colombati's *Bruce Springsteen: Like a Killer in the Sun (Come Un Killer Sotto Il Sole)* (Soronie Editore, 2007)


BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
COME UN KILLER SOTTO IL SOLE
IL GRANDE ROMANZO AMERICANO (1972-2007)
a cura di LEONARDO COLOMBATI
prefazione di ENNIO MORRICONE
SIRONI EDITORE

I was delighted to accept Leonardo Colombati's invitation to write an introduction to this book devoted to Bruce Springsteen. It isn't the run of the mill hagiography praising a mythical rock-star; there are no photographs of the sweaty singer raising his arms to the heavens while receiving an ovation from the thousands of ecstatic fans below the stage; and, above all, there is none of the sloppiness and slipshod inaccuracy which usually distinguish volumes illustrating pop songs.

Throughout the 20th Century, this type of music was a bountiful source for the emotions which have accompanied several generations from adolescence to maturity recounting—often far better than the other arts—the human condition in contemporary society.

This is a simple truth, long acknowledged in the United States, where pop music is considered an essential part of a single tradition whereby Hermann Melville and Walt Whitman, Robert Johnson and Louis Armstrong, John Ford and Bruce Springsteen live side-by-side in perfect harmony. Here in Europe, on the other hand, this tradition is underestimated: the gulf, created centuries ago, between popular culture and—literally—"noble" culture, has never been bridged. Just as the cinema, despite the numerous masterworks etched in all our memories, is still struggling for acceptance simply for what it is—an art branching out of the tree of narrative arts, of imagery and of music—thus, in the field of music there is still an abyss between "cultured" and "pop" music: only music which is by now considered antique and historical or—on the contrary—experimental and elitist, is acknowledged as "real art."

I met Bruce Springsteen for the first time in Rome, in 1997, at the end of an acoustic concert he gave in the Auditorium of Santa Cecilia. He had just come out onto the stage accompanied, as often happens during his shows, by the played-back notes of "Jill's Theme" from the music I wrote for the film *Once Upon a Time in the West.* Needless to say how pleased I was. Our meeting took place backstage and was very friendly: Bruce hugged me and insisted on having his photograph taken with me. We had never seen each other before and had long wanted to meet in person, also because the two of us feel spiritually very close both socially and politically.

In his songs, Springsteen creates a strong sense of *pietas*, of the pain and humanity inherent to the characters he recounts. And he does it not only through his music, using different timbres and sounds to endow them with a special personality, but also through his words: which is where his real power lies. Proof of this is to be found in the texts chosen and collected in this book; in the exhaustive, critical review which accompanies them and highlights their literary opulence; in the intertwining of vastly different sources—from the Bible to the cinema, from the blues to topical events; and also in the narrative power which renders the body of songs composed over 35 years a sort of Great American Novel. Or, to use Springsteen's own words, the screenplay of "a great film for an American drive-in".

Just reading the words of "Jungleland," "Racing in the Street," and "The River" brings the realization that that this is a fact. Springsteen's writing is "cinematographic": every verse is a cine-camera shot, each line is a scene, and each song introduces us to the full personality of the character, taken at the decisive moment of his life.

Any composer who, like myself, has written music for the big screen, cannot feel indifference towards this cinema-style writing. Music for the cinema, if it is valid, can be listened to and appreciated without looking at the images. At the same time, however, Springsteen's songs—both the music and the words—might well be compared to the score of a film still to be shot: they need no pictures to support them, because these are created by the songs themselves.

To describe Springsteen, rather than the Italian term *cantautore* (author-singer), it would be far better to use the American expression *storyteller.* Springsteen, in fact, perpetuates the tradition created by the bluesmen and the folksingers, similar to the now-almost extinct figure of our ballad singers.

A certain part of my thematic film composing and also of his, even though they are very different, has a common basis in the simple chords we use to create structured and original melodies. The composer of instrumental music must "redeem" this simplicity with an elaborate orchestration; the author-singer/storyteller can do so by using both voice and words, as long as the voice communicates an emotion and the words are "true." I like Springsteen precisely because he places this need for Truth in the forefront. This is why he manages to elude ephemeral trends, and why his music runs no risk of losing itself over the course of time.

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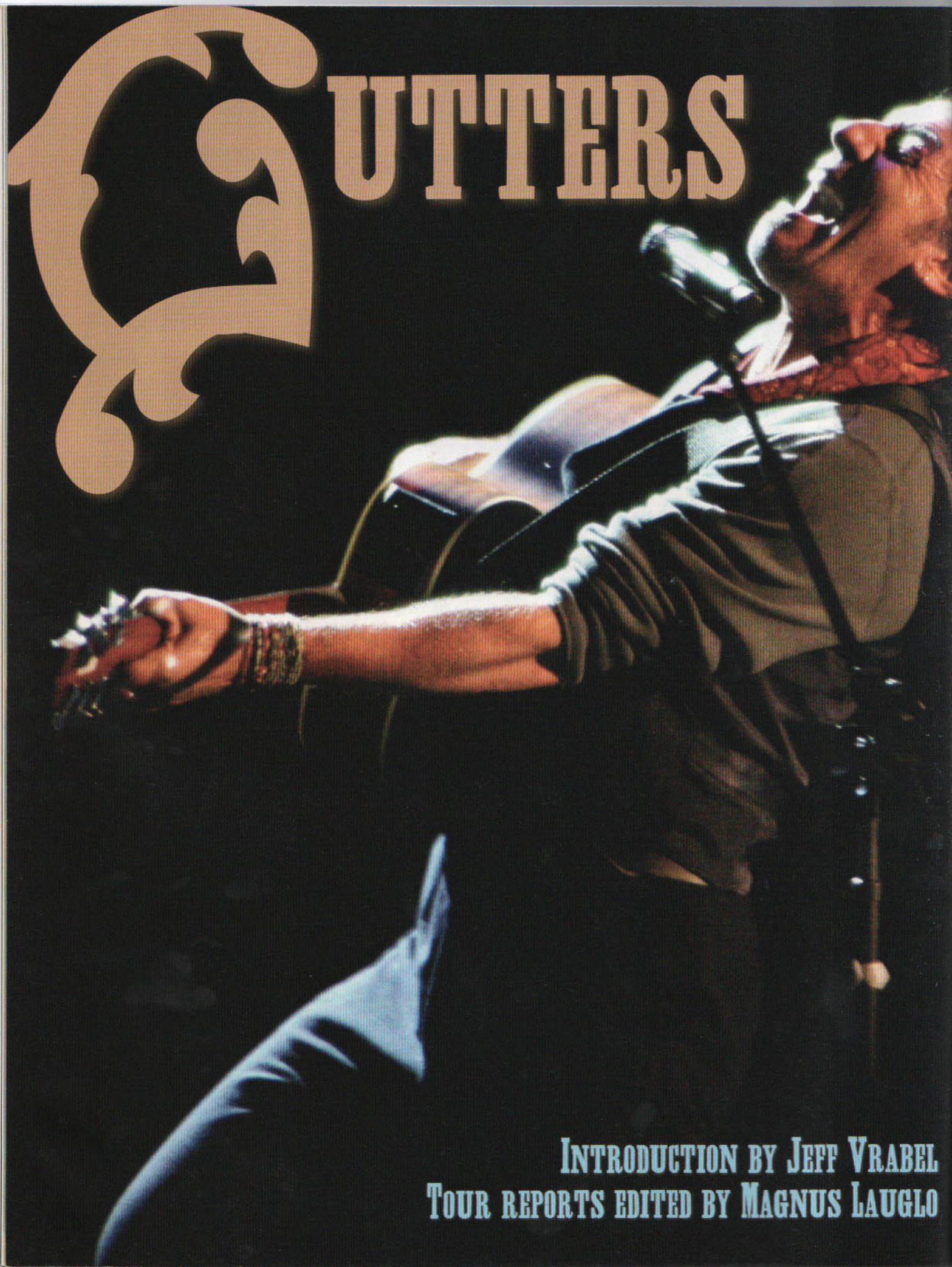
GUTTERS



Introduction by Jeff Vrabel

Tour reports edited by Magnus Lauglo

LINED IN SONG

THE SEEGER SESSIONS TOUR SHOW BY SHOW

I'm sure this is their problem, not mine, but on a normal day in recent years, I'd have trouble convincing my friends to accompany me to a Bruce Springsteen show. The more clever ones generally respond with a joke about hip replacements, detached retinas, Courteney Cox, or something on the order of, "Okay, but only if he plays the one about how there's nothing on cable."

But when I found myself with an extra ticket to a Seeger Sessions gig, the response went from blithely disinterested to nearly zilch; I got a lot of blank stares, crickets chirping in the background, that sort of thing. One asked—presciently, it turned out—for a list of five reasons he'd drop 90 bucks to hear Springsteen sing "Froggie Went A Courtin," an argument for which I found I had no response other than, "Erm...."

This is not entirely my friends' fault. The Seeger Sessions tour of summer 2006 takes the prize for the Worst Pitched Concert Tour of the Year, and certainly the worst in Bruce's career. Truth be told, hearing the conceit of the *We Shall Overcome* record didn't result in the usual episodes of sweaty anticipation; the idea of Bruce dishing up a series of 150-year-old folk songs sounded more or less like the opposite of fun, like something that would make me want to rush home and bear-hug my copy of the "Dancing in the Dark" maxi-single. I like Pete Seeger, and obviously I'm into Bruce, but traditionally, when the latter indulges his folkie thing, the results—*Nebraska*, *The Ghost of Tom Joad*—are less something that you want to see on an amphitheater stage and more like something you'd listen to while drinking self-made moonshine out of a mason jar in an abandoned outhouse and howling at the moon until you die. Be honest. A lot of people reading this thought the same thing. Judging by the irrationally aggressive reaction on some of the message boards, a lot of you thought a lot worse.

Which is why the Seeger Sessions tour was such a welcome blast of a surprise. It was partly because it's hard to be really, really surprised at a Bruce show these days, but more because the show that was on paper pitched as a revival of old-school folk music turned out to be a roaring, impossibly large jam session, an 18-piece, pure American party-and-a-half. Seeger's name was on the ticket, sure (despite the revisionist history of the "Sessions Band" billed on *Live in Dublin*), but in Springsteen's hands the music got an enormous, big-band treatment that can only be explained with commas: gospel, blues, folk, rock, zydeco.... all of this pouring out of a tap attached to New Orleans. This was a big Big Easy show, a tribute to the flooded city. It was Bruce born on the bayou, part mourning, part hope, part celebration, part cry for rebirth—all metaphors you may remember from Every Other Thing Bruce Springsteen Has Ever Done.

Had the preliminary press materials and media coverage included something like, "Bruce will turn the lo-fi ramshackle rambler 'Open All Night' into an 11-minute, explosively swinging, horn-powered rave-up," there might have been more people in all those empty seats in 2006. In Indianapolis, where Bruce Springsteen played to about 5,000 people and an absolutely empty lawn, it was impossible to look at the yawning green space and not think that in a few weeks, Jimmy Buffett would, as he does every year, cram the place to within an inch of its life singing songs about cheeseburgers and beer.

Springsteen's band on this tour comprised 18 musicians, four of them on horns, one on pedal-steel guitar. There was a washboard, a banjo, a boogie-woogie pianist, an extended solo bequeathed to the tuba player. In Indianapolis, the instruments included all that *and* a kitchen sink. "Jesus Christ, be careful," Springsteen cracked over the percussive dish-bashing, proving he didn't leave his showman skills in Jersey. "That's my mother-in-law's goddamned silverware... Patti's gonna fucking kill me!"

Springsteen's non-E Street tours tend to evolve pretty quickly—the *Tom Joad* tour, you'll remember, began as an unflinchingly bleak tour of the barren Southwest and ended up giving about five minutes over to a discussion on cunnilingus—and this one was no exception. It took nearly no time at all for Springsteen to work up the cornerstone of the show, a roaring reworking of an old Blind Alfred Reed song called "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" where Bruce howled over the infuriating incompetence of the non-response to Katrina while the band burst into explosions of cathartic rage behind him. Later, he'd dust off Pete Seeger's "Bring 'Em Home," now an Iraq-themed polemic that had less subtlety than "Poor Man." Sonically they fit into the show because of their folkie leanings; thematically, they jarred listeners into the present not only because they were indicative of the aforementioned Every Other Thing Bruce Springsteen Has Ever Done, but also, more powerfully, by reminding them that the issues inherent in classic American music never really change.

What it might have lacked in the fist-pumping mass catharsis of "Badlands", the tour made up for in the fist-pumping mass catharsis of "My Oklahoma Home." Even the slow songs involved the crowd; even the detours into the Springsteen catalog ("Johnny 99," "Atlantic City," "You Can Look") fit snugly into the evening's theme—what there was of it. This wasn't a tour with an agenda. There was no worry about enlivening one's legacy, little press, no baggage. This was more of a house party than "Mary's Place," a surprise success, a seventh-grade science fair project whose results were well more telling than expected, a slightly altered reality where twenty-somethings square dance. Political overtones and wartime prayers may have burbled to the surface throughout the show, but even so, this was a glider flight, a lark, a breath of fresh air with an open bar. I can't remember having a better time at a Bruce show. Or for that matter, just about any show.

AMANDA COPLANS PHOTO

MAY 5
THE POINT
DUBLIN, IRELAND

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Buffalo Gals/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: After warm-ups in Asbury Park and the band's official debut in New Orleans [see *Backstreets* #85], the European tour begins. Bruce re-expands the trimmed-down set from Jazz Fest for a two-and-a-quarter-hour show, adding tour premieres "Adam" and "Erie Canal" to an otherwise identical lineup. For this and a few other European shows, Bruce adds an extra verse to "John Henry":

Now when John Henry died there was no box
That was big enough to hold his bones
They buried him in the boxcar deep in the ground
And they let two mountains be his gravestones

For the European tour, the horn section consists of Art Baron (tuba), Clark Gayton (trombone), Eddie Manion (saxophone), and Curt Ramm (trumpet).

REINVENTION: We have witnessed an extraordinary feat of reinvention as Bruce has gone from E Street Rising to Dust to Ragtime in a very short three years. Only a year since the *Devils & Dust* acoustic show illustrated the true extent of Bruce's musicianship, abilities and talents, Bruce led 17 players onto the same Dublin stage to underline yet again why he is the Boss. Tonight Bruce was the MC, the Musical Director, the Clown Supreme. He is in absolutely superb form, and it was an evening of joy, fun, and liberation. The crowd erupted into song at the first chords of "Old Dan Tucker" and sang along as if they had known the song forever—which they pretty much had!

—Karl Birthistle

A CANNONBALL ON THE FIFTH OF MAY: My main impression was that the show was a lot of *fun*—Bruce seemed to really be enjoying himself and smiling a lot. The crowd seemed into it from the start, dancing and singing along unprompted to many of the new songs. In fact, I can't remember dancing throughout so much of a Springsteen concert before.

The band sounded great, and personalities are already starting to emerge—particularly Marc Anthony Thompson and Greg Liszt, whom the crowd seemed particularly taken with, much to Bruce's amusement.

Highlights included "Mrs. McGrath," which unsurprisingly got a huge ovation, with Bruce commenting beforehand that an Irish friend phoned to tell him about his mispronunciation: "Bruce, you dumb bastard, it's *McGraw*, not *McGrath!*'" The line about the fifth of May got a huge cheer, too.

The stage set was a bit similar to the *Devils & Dust* tour, with heavy curtains and washes of colored lighting, plus several chandeliers overhead and some colorful paper lanterns. There's a banner over the stage that says "Bruce Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band," like an old-style revue stage. *—Sally Parker*

MAY 7
MANCHESTER EVE. NEWS ARENA
MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/How Can I Keep From Singing?/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a

Shadows of the Past: Springsteen returns to Hammersmith, May 8, 2006.

Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Buffalo Gals/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: One of the few European shows not to sell out, with scalpers selling for less than face value outside the show. The premiere of "How Can I Keep From Singing," which will be performed rarely over the course of the tour. Replacing the setlisted "Adam Raised a Cain," "Cadillac Ranch" returns to the set, in its new arrangement with "Mystery Train" choruses. On the setlist but not played: "If I Should Fall Behind," as an alternate for "My City of Ruins."

"MYSTERY TRAIN" MYSTERY: Manchester was great, just because it was the first time I'd seen Bruce in a few years. But the venue was completely unsuitable, so Bruce had to work very hard to overcome the poor acoustics, a slightly unruly audience, and the fact most of the crowd was quite far away.

After a few songs Bruce seemed to work out that if he came to the lip of the stage, the crowd in that area would rush the stage. During "Old Dan Tucker" he systematically worked his way across the entire front of the stage, noting at song's end: "The stage has just been rushed to a 150-year-old song!"

The "Cadillac Ranch"/"Mystery Train" mash-up was fantastic, though there's some misfiring of the crowd participation on the chorus. Some recognize "Mystery Train," others recognize "Cadillac Ranch," but it's the combination of the two that throws them. When it comes time to sing along, I think they're just not sure where to go or what to sing.

—Nick Corr

MAY 8
HAMMERSMITH APOLLO THEATRE
LONDON, ENGLAND

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/**Long Black Veil**/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/How Can I Keep From Singing?/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Buffalo Gals/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

IN THE AUDIENCE: Greg Dyke, former Director General of the BBC.

NOTES: Three decades on, Springsteen finally returns to the site of his first UK shows; the tour premiere of "Long Black Veil" is an audible. See pages 52-53 for full report.

MAY 9
ST. LUKE'S CHURCH
LONDON, ENGLAND

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep (take one)/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/How Can I Keep From Singing?/Mrs. McGrath (take one)/Mrs. McGrath (take two)/My Oklahoma Home/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/O Mary Don't You Weep (take two)/Pay Me My Money Down

IN THE AUDIENCE: Emmylou Harris, Elvis Costello, Stephen Merchant, and the *Old Grey Whistle Test's* Bob Harris.

NOTES: See pages 52-53

London, May 8, 2006.

AMANDA COPLANS PHOTO

MAY 10
PALAIS BERCY
PARIS, FRANCE

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/**If I Should Fall Behind**/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Buffalo Gals/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/**Bring 'Em Home**/When the Saints Go Marching In

SOUNDCHECK: Includes work on "Bring 'Em Home"

NOTES: The first European show with a pit. Springsteen premieres Pete Seeger's Vietnam-era "Bring 'Em Home"—originally "Bring Them Home (If You Love Your Uncle Sam)"—in the encore, an updated version with some of his own lyrics. The waltz arrangement of "If I Should Fall Behind" has its first tour performance after a few workouts at the Asbury rehearsals. Both Elliott Murphy and Garland Jeffreys guest for "Buffalo Gals."

NOUVELLE ORLEANS: This was the fourth consecutive night of performing for the band, but there were no signs that Bruce was tiring. Compared to Dublin, he was now focusing more on the crowd and less on directing the band.

Most of the song introductions were shorter than in Dublin, with Bruce speaking some French. He called "Eyes on the Prize" *"une chanson des droits humains"*—"a song about human rights"—and "Mrs. McGrath" *"une chanson de la guerre"*—"a song about war." "If I Should Fall Behind" was a highlight, featuring some personal interaction between Bruce and Patti and some strong singing from the crowd, which even prompted Bruce to restart the "La la la las" after the song had ended for the first time.

Before "Poor Man" Bruce talked again about *"Nouvelle Orleans,"* a longer intro in which he described New Orleans as the mother city of all music but also traced its roots further back: "So basically, it's the music that came from over here," he concluded. *—Jos Westenberg*

Garland Jeffreys and Elliott Murphy backstage in Paris, May 10, 2006.

FRANCESCO CALAZZO PHOTO

LONDON'S HISTORIC DOUBLE SHOT OF SPRINGSTEEN

BY MIKE SAUNDERS

In November 1975, Bruce Springsteen flew to London with the E Street Band and experienced the negative effects of jet lag, culture shock and a series of overblown claims made on his behalf by the CBS publicity machine. He was rock 'n' roll's future, and apparently London was finally ready for him. Angered and distracted by the hype, he felt that his November 18 performance at Hammersmith Odeon fell way below his usual high standards. Although his second appearance at the Odeon six days later was considerably more successful, Bruce probably returned home associating the west London venue with memories of failure and of events spinning out of his control. In subsequent years, he returned to the city many times to play sold-out gigs at Wembley (arena and stadium), the Royal Albert Hall, Brixton Academy, Earl's Court and elsewhere, but showed no signs of wanting to return to the site of his first concert outside of North America.

GEOFF ROBINSON PHOTO

Events took an unexpected turn in November 2005 with the release of the *Born to Run* 30th anniversary package. The box set's *Hammersmith Odeon, London '75* DVD suggested that Bruce had revisited and re-evaluated his infamous UK debut performance, discovered that it was considerably better than he'd remembered, and deemed it worthy of official release. At the time, there was no indication that Bruce had plans to revisit the venue, but soon after the separate CD version of the show appeared in February 2006, news of the *We Shall Overcome* album and Seeger Sessions Band tour began to circulate, and early rumors hinted that a London date had indeed been penciled in at the renamed Hammersmith Apollo. Two concerts at the Royal Albert Hall were also being considered as an alternative, but a single night at the Apollo was eventually confirmed for May 8. Tickets went on sale in the first week of April and predictably disappeared in minutes. Somewhat improbably, an old chapter in London's rock history was about to be updated. Finally, Bruce Springsteen was ready for Hammersmith again.

Opened in 1932 as the Gaumont Palace Hammersmith, the building became Hammersmith Odeon in 1962 and stayed that way for 30 years, after which brewery sponsorship deals turned it into the Labatts Apollo and then the Carling Apollo. These days it is most commonly referred to as the Hammersmith Apollo, but this is just the latest incarnation of a famous venue that rock fans in general (and Springsteen fans in particular) will always call the Hammersmith Odeon. Following a recent renovation, the downstairs section of the Apollo can accommodate seated or standing audiences. The latter option was chosen for Bruce's show, increasing the capacity from 3,700 to 5,000 and ensuring that the theater would have the atmosphere of a large club.

"Good evening, London—this place looks familiar!" said Bruce as he walked up to the center microphone at the Hammersmith Apollo for the first time in over three decades, later adding that there were "a lot of ghosts haunting this place tonight." Decorated in shades of pink and red, the venue's '30s interior was perfectly complemented by the chandeliers and drapes that surrounded the band. It was the ideal setting for Bruce's new old-time music, in contrast to the concrete cavern that was the Manchester Evening News Arena. Although he displayed no obvious signs of nervousness as the performance gathered momentum, Bruce later admitted, "I drove in that alley and I have to say I was moved to puke my guts out when I got inside. Once that was over, it's all gravy now for the rest of the night."

The show lasted almost two-and-a-half hours and featured 11 of the 13 songs from the *We Shall Overcome* album, which had only been available for two weeks. Even if many were not familiar with the material, the instantly infectious choruses ensured a high level of audience participation, with the lively crowd accompanying Bruce on the "Low bridge, everybody down!" and "Blown away!" refrains of "Erie Canal" and "My Oklahoma Home," respectively, and continuing to chant the lyrics to set-closer "Pay Me My Money Down" while the band left the stage and returned for the encores. Also included in the concert were the DVD bonus tracks "How Can I Keep From Singing?" (a showcase for Patti Scialfa's voice) and "Buffalo Gals," and "Long Black Veil," another well-chosen cover that blended seamlessly with the album material.

The 21-song set featured only five selections from the Springsteen back catalog, all rearranged in *Seeger Sessions* style. Joining "Johnny 99" were "Cadillac Ranch" (which morphed into "Mystery Train" and back again), an eight-minute "Open All Night" with the horn section in full blast, a gospel-flavored "My City of Ruins" and an extended "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)." The last of these included the familiar "license, registration" rap (which climaxed with the line, "But officer, what can a poor boy do but play in a ragtime band?") and fell apart near the end, prompting Bruce to shout "Train wreck!" and count the song back in. The mistake was all part of the fun and seemed a natural consequence of the band's spontaneous method of music making.

"At this rate I'll be back in this building when I'm 88. That ain't too old! Gettin' younger every day, right?" joked Bruce while introducing "When the Saints Go Marching In," the final song of the evening. "Fun to be back here, fun to be back in this place," he continued. "I thought they tore it down or something. I didn't even think it was still here. This is one of those places that I'm permanently in and it's permanently in me. I want to thank you, London, finally ready for hundreds-of-years-old songs. Thank you for the warm welcome, and God bless. We love you, and we'll be seeing you."

As he walked into the shadows, a bearded figure wearing baggy pants, a leather jacket and a woolly cap may have invisibly high-fived him, peered out at the departing crowd, and smiled. It had been an unforgettable night for many reasons, notable for its significance in Springsteen history but also for its exciting atmosphere and enthusiastic audience response, the London debut of Bruce's new band, and most importantly, for some inspiring, exhilarating music.

The national press mostly chose to focus on Bruce's Dublin gig several days earlier, but Tim De Lisle gave the Hammersmith Apollo show a five-star review in *The Mail on Sunday*: "When you tell people how good Bruce Springsteen's new album is, they take some convincing. Once you discover how much fun Springsteen has had with these traditional tunes, all resistance melts. More than any of his albums, this one captures the contagious warmth of his concerts. The band has terrific range and he uses it to switch genres, often in mid-song. This is folk with lashings of jazz, gospel, Cajun and country. By rearranging several songs, simplifying here, amplifying there, he makes them his own. By choosing them carefully, he makes them topical. Rather than reverence, they are treated with exuberance. The gospel songs have a whiff of the bar as well as the choir, and Springsteen's voice reverts to the delirious holler of his youth. The crowd go out into the night not just humming but throbbing, having seen the gig of the year so far."

Having returned to Hammersmith Apollo to complete some unfinished business, Bruce moved six miles east the following night to give an equally significant and even more intimate performance at LSO St. Luke's in Islington. A once-derelict church (completed in 1733) that has been restored and converted into a rehearsal hall for the London Symphony Orchestra, St. Luke's also hosts concerts and other private events. On this occasion, the BBC was recording Bruce's first UK-based radio and TV special for imminent broadcast, a major coup for the organization. Capacity was limited to 300, and admission was reported to be extremely tough, even for BBC executives. For the general public, entry was restricted to the winners

PAUL WICKENS PHOTO

of numerous competitions which ran in the week prior to the event, although around 50 fans who appropriately turned up on the night with nothing but faith and hope were eventually allowed inside.

Early arrivals at St. Luke's were able to spot Jon Landau and BBC producer Mark Hagen (who also worked on *Bruce Springsteen: A Secret History* in 1998) in the churchyard, through gaps between several recording trucks parked around the back. They also got a friendly wave from Bruce and Patti when they arrived in the mid-afternoon sunshine. A few hours later, fans, celebrities, media types, and assorted other guests began to turn up, queuing beside one another and patiently waiting to enter the smallest venue Bruce had ever played in London and one of the smallest anywhere in the world. Once they'd passed through a narrow doorway with the words "O Come Let Us Sing Unto The Lord" carved into the arch above, they were confronted with a state-of-the-art modern performance space inside an 18th-century shell, a blend of old and new materials and construction techniques in perfect harmony. The main floor was a general admission standing area (cordoned off from the stage by the thinnest of security barriers) but those with guest tickets also had the option of watching the show from a narrow balcony that overlooked the stage on both sides.

The evening began when a member of the production team asked the crowd to make some noise for a few seconds to provide extra audience footage and test sound levels. Their exuberant response was apparently the loudest ever heard in the venue. BBC DJ Johnnie Walker's suggestion during his official introduction—that it was a night for getting rid of British inhibitions—was hardly necessary. "You are 300 of the luckiest people in the world tonight; you are in the right place," he confirmed. "We've had some really amazing concerts in this series, but basically they've been warm-up gigs for this one. This is a night about joy, it's a night about abandonment, and it's a night about having the best time you've ever had." Urging the crowd not to raise the roof but to raise the steeple, he ushered Bruce and the band onto the small stage to a rapturous reception.

Although he'd already played two shows on consecutive days and had to appear in Paris the following night, Bruce tore into opener "John Henry" with the same energy he displayed in Hammersmith, further threatening the foundations of the ancient building, which has historically suffered from subsidence problems. Although this was never destined to be a full-length performance, a couple of false starts, retakes of "Mrs. McGrath" (because out-of-time audience clapping "fucks up the band") and "O Mary Don't You Weep" (due to lighting vibration problems caused by people stamping their feet upstairs), and the unexpected addition of "How Can I Keep From Singing?" (not included on the eight-song setlist) stretched its duration to almost 90 minutes, beginning as daylight was streaming through the uncovered plain glass windows and ending in darkness. It was fascinating to witness the interplay between musicians, to check out the many instruments that were utilized throughout the evening, to observe the filming process (various types of cameras were positioned all around the venue), and simply to watch Bruce in action from no more than a few feet away, a rare privilege.

Arriving at St. Luke's

The man himself was in high spirits, at one point realizing that "We didn't bring the friggin' organ! We can't let that stop us can we? Hell, no!" Hearing a lone cry of recognition while he was announcing "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?," he joked, "There's a Blind Alfred Reed fan over there!" Having explained that "We are all climbing Jacob's Ladder rung by rung by rung—you can ask my wife!," he then launched into the song alone. He soon conceded: "This is not how this song begins, it doesn't begin remotely like this.... I was enjoying myself so tremendously!" and started again with the proper introduction from the horn section. Commenting about the Hammersmith gig, he said that he thought the Apollo might have been destroyed in some kind of apocalyptic explosion, but he had been pleasantly surprised to discover that it was still standing.

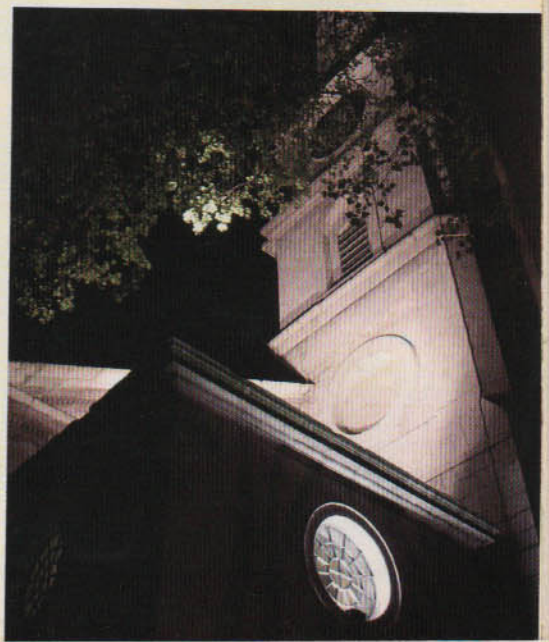
When Bruce and the band took their bows and made their way offstage, the audience continued chanting the chorus of "Pay Me My Money Down" as they had the night before, but this time the house lights came back on and there was no encore. As the lucky 300 (some of whom got autographs as Bruce made his exit) spilled out into the night with the illuminated spire of St. Luke's towering above them through the trees, they took away the knowledge that they had been part of something very special.

"The lyrical content might have been about hardship and injustice, but musically these were songs with soaring choruses and surging melodies," wrote Sarfraz Manzoor in *The Observer*. "Standing only feet away from the band you notice what otherwise might be missed. The generous smiles Springsteen gave to his bandmates encouraging them to enjoy the applause, the easy chemistry between Springsteen and his wife Patti Scialfa and the general air of a man free from pretensions and utterly comfortable in his own skin. The audience might have been tiny, but this was a titanic performance, the intimate concert that Springsteen fans had prayed for. How fitting that their prayers were answered inside the walls of an old church."

For two weeks in mid-May, Bruce's St. Luke's performance was constantly on the airwaves or online in one form or another in the U.K. The sustained media blitz commenced on May 13, when an hour-long version of the concert (minus "How Can I Keep From Singing?") was broadcast on BBC Radio 2 as part of their *Sold on Song* series. This 60-minute edit was then shown on BBC 4 TV on May 19 in the *BBC 4 Sessions* series and repeated on BBC 2 TV on May 20. A short pre-show interview with Bruce backstage at St. Luke's by Johnnie Walker (whose spoken introduction was aired on the radio but replaced by clips from the *We Shall Overcome* DVD on TV) was included on his Radio 2 show on May 21. In addition, a 20-minute loop of three songs from the gig was available for viewing between May 13 and May 21 on the BBC's interactive digital TV service and online via the Radio 2 website. Similarly, the 60-minute audio soundtrack and Johnnie Walker interview could be revisited for seven days after their initial broadcast dates by accessing the *Listen Again* feature on the Radio 2 website. Finally, individual songs from the St. Luke's concert (which made its U.S. debut in July on the PBS TV series *Great Performances*) were played by several Radio 2 DJs in their regular shows during this period. Virtually forgotten while attention was focused elsewhere was a documentary on Emmylou Harris narrated by Patti Scialfa on Radio 2 on April 29, and an hour-long edit of the *Hammersmith Odeon, London '75* film that immediately followed the St Luke's special on BBC 4 TV on May 19.

Once the dust had settled, those lucky enough to have attended both shows were able to reflect upon the events of May 8 and 9 and realize that what might have once seemed impossible had actually taken place in spectacular fashion. For most U.K. Springsteen fans, Hammersmith 1975 was a lifetime ago, and the chances of him ever appearing there again were extremely slim. The possibility of him playing the equivalent of a free club gig for 300 people in a former church for BBC radio and TV was even less likely. Both nights were the stuff of dreams, but they came true, proving that faith will be rewarded and that nobody can predict Bruce's next move these days. The two London concerts of May 2006 now form part of Springsteen performance history and will always be counted among the memorable nights of his long career.

MIKE SAUNDERS PHOTO



MAY 12
FORUM
MILAN, ITALY

SETLIST: Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/John Henry/Eyes on the Prize/Old Dan Tucker/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: The debut of "Ramrod" in a "Texicali" arrangement. "Buffalo Gals" extends the show past "When the Saints Go Marching In" for the first time. Best of all, *"Ci vediamo in autunno!"*—"See you in the fall!"—confirms that what was initially announced as a "mini-tour" isn't even close to finished with Europe yet.

LA PASSIONE: A Bruce show in Italy is like a great evening with an old friend you all too rarely meet. Bruce thanked the European fans for supporting his various musical adventures over the last decades. This kind of music is completely new to the Springsteen canon, yet it suits Bruce as well as everything else he's done in the past. There was not a single low point during the concert, and too many highlights to mention all of them.

As a non-Italian, I will readily admit that Bruce plays his craziest concerts in Italy and Spain. I have seen concerts all over Europe and even some in the States, but no other crowd is as passionate as the Italian or Spanish fans. As always, Bruce spoke some Italian himself, mentioning that his grandmother emigrated from Salerno, near Napoli. —*Pascal Dysli*

SING OUT!: It was mostly a party, a night of singalong fun. It was as if the Italian crowd was there to impress the band with loud singing and shouting. And they were all flabbergasted, save for Bruce himself, who has gotten quite used to the Italian fans by now. Still, Bruce was clearly moved by 13,000 people shouting "Come on rise up" at the top of their lungs. "How Can a Poor Man" stands as the best moment of the night. Bruce's singing, perhaps because of his rewritten and current lyrics, seemed to be more meaningful and purposeful than on other songs.

On a night like this, you could tell the audience was as inspiring to Bruce as he was to them. Sometimes, though, the audience singing started too soon, disturbing quiet and intimate moments and prompting Bruce to silence the crowd with a wave of his hand. Sometimes the singalongs lasted too long, repeated between songs, bringing Bruce to lead them to an end. At times it seemed unnaturally exaggerated, as if stemming from a desire to impress, rather than genuinely fitting the real feeling with the band. But if I were Bruce I'd be eternally grateful for the Italian crowd. Maybe I'm getting old faster than Bruce and his other fans. But it was a great, great night. —*Giorgio Malucelli*

Bruce cheers on the "Open All Night" trio in Milan, May 12, 2006.

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

MAY 14
PAVELLÓ OLÍMPIC
BADALONA, SPAIN

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: "Adam Raised a Cain" replaces the setlisted "Cadillac Ranch." Patti Scialfa's last show of the European leg.

WHERE THE FANS ARE: I wondered if I was the only U.S. fan there—I didn't see any others. As I entered the arena I felt the emotion and frenzy of the fans. When they get to their seats, they don't move: no food, beverages, or bathroom breaks. We were also instructed (by postcards passed out outside the arena) that at 9:30 we were to start singing "Pay Me My Money Down" until the band came onstage. And at 9:25, we started singing. My eyes and ears were in shock. These fans are so passionate about the music and Bruce. The floor fans were shoulder to shoulder and swaying the whole show, their arms in the air, and they knew every song. And it was *loud!* Barcelona rocks! —*Maria Castellano*

GROWING STRONGER EVERY DAY: Three songs in, and it was clear that the band is so much tighter than at earlier shows. They follow Bruce's cues just like E Street veterans. Many players have visibly grown in confidence and stature over the last two weeks—the improvement is especially evident with the drums, banjo and the beautiful singing of Marc Anthony Thompson. "Johnny 99" is a horn tour-de-force, the music being reinvented every night before your very eyes! It is magical to watch Bruce guide and steer two fiddles and a banjo through a complex musical arrangement of "Adam Raised a Cain," a look of intense concentration etched on his face. "If I Should Fall Behind" is played for Patti, as this is her last night on the tour for a while, and as the crowd sang the ending refrain again and again after the song ended, the emotion on Bruce's face was quite apparent. —*Karl Birthistle*

MAY 16
HEINEKEN MUSIC HALL
AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Long Black Veil/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: After the concert, Greg Liszt plays "Fire," "I'm on Fire" and "Hungry Heart" with local singer Norbert Frijns at a bar close to the Heineken Music Hall. The last song is requested by Liszt, who says he has been practicing it.

WORK IN PROGRESS: The setlist seemed to have Bruce playing it safe, but it was a show with a high intensity level. Sound quality was extremely good, thanks to the building's great acoustics.

"Cadillac Ranch" had Bruce directing the band more, trying out new things in the "Mystery Train" parts and especially a longer ending. "This is a work in progress each night," Bruce concluded. Bruce dueted with Marc Anthony Thompson on a great version of "Long Black Veil" and dedicated it to Patti: "Patti is back home with the kids. They keep asking, 'When is Mom coming home?' It's never, 'When is Dad coming home?'" With Patti gone, the vocal intro to "Open All Night" was dropped; instead, all solo players got even a little more space. —*Jos Westenberg*

AMSTERDAM: POST SHOW

MAY 16, 2006 INTERVIEW BY JAN EIKELBOOM

The week before Bruce's show at the Heineken Music Hall (HMH) I received an email from my friend Jan Eikelboom, who works for *Nova*, Holland's most respected news program: "We're doing an interview with Bruce, 15 minutes and no politics." I know Jan from high school—we still go to concerts together—so I sent him an email back asking, "Can I come with you?" His reply: "As far as I'm concerned, that's no problem—I'm putting you in my team as my researcher." I can hardly believe it. Is it that easy to go to an interview with Bruce?

On the day of the show, it didn't look so easy after all. I arrived at the HMH right on time for the mid-afternoon soundcheck, as instructed; the interview was supposed to take place immediately afterward. But then Jan called: "Bruce hasn't arrived yet, things will start at 5:00." An hour later, Sony tells Jan that Bruce still hasn't arrived from Barcelona and things just look bad. After some plane trouble, he's now with the band on a flight from Iberia, apparently they will land at 6:40. With not even time for a soundcheck, an interview seems impossible.

But soon after Bruce finally arrives, just an hour before showtime, we're told that he agreed to do the interview after the performance. We're allowed up to the second floor to set up before the show. It's quite crowded up there: the band is busy with instruments, the horns are practicing, many people are walking around. I notice that the band is relaxed despite the late arrival, though—they laugh a lot. The camera and sound crew sets things up before we're hurried downstairs, as the concert could start at any minute.

The show is absolutely fantastic—the music is totally different from what we've been used to, but it's so contagious, the audience gets really wild. After the show we're taken back upstairs: "Bruce just has to take a shower, takes about 15 minutes." A final camera and lights check, Jan looking through some questions and notes, and there is Bruce!

Taking a seat on the couch, he talks about the style of music, the band's spontaneity, the "voices" in the songs that drew him to the material. Although Jan was advised "no political questions" (by Sony) in advance, Jan asks if it was a "political statement" to call the album *We Shall Overcome*. This question takes the interview in another direction. Bruce had talked about the music, but now he describes the message of the songs, making quite a few statements about Bush, the war in Iraq and the situation in New Orleans.

While the footage that aired (and this transcript) ends on that note, Jan did return to the music again to close the interview, asking, "Did Pete Seeger like the record?"

"Well," Bruce replied, "Pete was surprised by all the horns and the extra instruments, but he liked the result." Bruce added a nice story, looking quite amazed: "One evening, Pete came down for dinner. His guitar was on his back, he was 85... and he came by public bus!"

— *Wilco Schepen*

***Eikelboom:* You guys really are enjoying yourselves!**

Springsteen: Well, to do the job correctly, that helps *[laughs]*. There's so much music on stage, the band is so rich.... It's really three kinds of music: it's a string band—fidddles, banjo, guitars; there's brass band, like an old New Orleans brass section, street brass bands that play old Kansas City blues and Dixieland music, and that New Orleans horn music; and then there's a little gospel section, really, with the singers. So we have those three things, and I suppose I'm the rock 'n' roll element that comes in *[laughs]*, that comes along and kicks it all in the butt a little bit.

So all of those things are mixing on stage constantly. It's lovely to have those three elements in one place, because we'll play like a country, *sort* of a country thing, which would be "Jesse James," but the guys burst into this old jazz, Kansas City/Dixieland horn arrangement. And so for me it's very enjoyable, because it's colors that I don't use with my other work—you know, with the E Street Band and by myself—and it's just very exciting.

And the music was so beautifully written, when it was written. Why these songs have lasted so long is because they were very, very *good*. Jackson Browne once said to me, "The nice thing about those good songs: they stay written." You write a good one, it's there tomorrow—it's there 100 years from now, if somebody wants to sing it. The detail in "Erie Canal," and "Mrs. McGrath," "Oklahoma Home," the wit, the irony...

It still works today.

As much as ever. These songs could have been written yesterday.

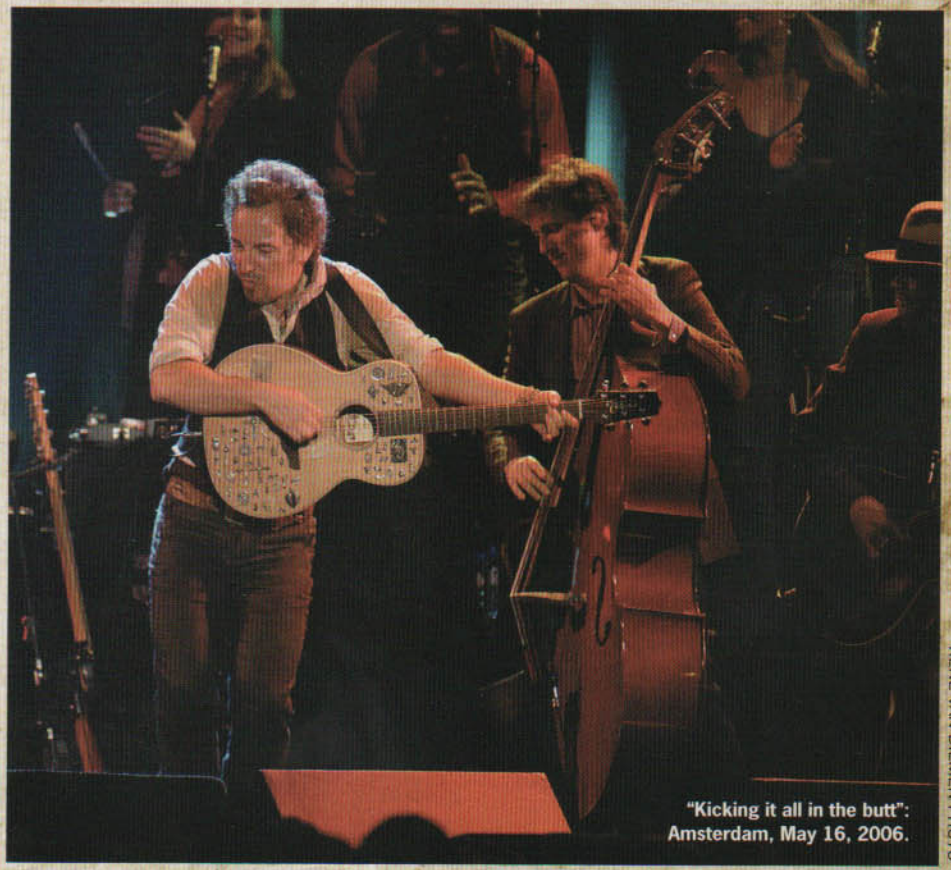
You recorded the album in your living room?

Yes. There's a farmhouse on my property, I've recorded there pretty often—I recorded a good piece of *Devils & Dust* there. It's basically a room maybe three or four times the size of this, just a regular living room, and we just squeezed everybody in.

Did everybody fit?

Yes—well, the horns had to play in the hall! But it was done in three days, really just three days, and it was all very spontaneous.... the songs were kind of conducted as we went. It's a testament to how good the players were that the music came out so rich, because they had no music to read, no rehearsal, no arrangements worked out. It was just: "Gee, I think at the beginning I'd like to hear *[quickly sings a fiddle riff]*, and maybe the horns could come in on the second verse, and this is our rhythm, and one, two, three..." So it was very, very spontaneous.

I wanted the feeling of old parlor music. It started with "We Shall Overcome," which has the feeling of everyone sitting in the living room and kind of sharing that particular song. It was tavern music, bar music, street corner music.... It was the shortest record I've ever made in my life, the easiest record to record in my life.



"Kicking it all in the butt": Amsterdam, May 16, 2006.

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

And was it fun to record it?

Oh, yeah.The first two sessions, I didn't think I was doing anything. I was just kind of playing for our own satisfaction, you know: "Gee, this is interesting...." I met these [musicians] at a party at my house. "Let's play a little bit together, it's just a Sunday afternoon...." They were really just these Saturday, Sunday afternoon sessions that were very casual, with no intent of making a record or doing a tour or anything. We were just playing to hear what it was going to sound like. I was compelled by the voices in the songs, and compelled by the music; I was just learning. "These songs... I hear my voice in this music. Let's see what I would add to it."

Why Pete Seeger?

Well, Pete Seeger has probably the largest single archival collection of recorded songs, in a sense. He cast his nets very wide; it's international music, really. But he just recorded and touched so much, it was a wonderful single source to go to to find music. And his presentation was so direct that you could grasp the songs immediately, which I think was his intent. He was a tremendous communicator. Played for kids, played for everybody. And he was a real populist entertainer—his idea was that he came out on stage, and he wanted to engage you as quickly as possible, get you to *sing* as quickly as possible. So all these songs happen to have these enormous choruses—which is why, at this show, people *sing* all night. Because the choruses were so strong. "Oklahoma Home": *"Blowed away!"* "Mrs. McGrath": *"Too-ri-a...."* Look at "Pay Me My Money Down," "Jacob's Ladder"... the payoff is these big, beautiful choruses that were meant for choral voices. They were meant for community singing; they were meant to join people together, lifting their voices in song.

So we come out and we play the show, and people sing it like it's a greatest hits album! *[Laughs]* They sing it like they sing "Born to Run"! Because the songs were so *singable*. Actually, on my own, I don't write that many choruses—even "Born to Run," there's no chorus in those terms. There's "Tramps like us... we were born to run," but there's no *chorus* in "Born to Run." I don't write that many. And so to have an evening where it's one after another, all these long, beautiful choruses... that allows the audience in, to join in and sing.

And like I say, the voices in the songs, really, it's the voices of real, raw democracy. There are voices from everyplace. It's what made the record timely, at a time in the States where so many of those values have been eroded and challenged.

Is it a political statement to call the album *We Shall Overcome?*

Well, really, I thought it was just a dramatic title; it was also the song that Pete is probably best known for having a hand in.... It was either going to be that or no title. Yeah, I wanted the record to be timely, in a subtle way. If you get into it, "Mrs. McGrath" could have been written yesterday, about Iraq. And in the States it's been a terrible period of struggle and erosion of a lot the things that we hold dear—enormous erosion, I think, of democratic values and civil rights. It's been a terrible time, a terrible time politically; the last six years have been a real tragedy. The government, for all intents and purposes, was truly hijacked. And so it was a good time—I mean, it was just something where the music just kind of came along at a certain moment, but when I looked into it, the songs and the characters... it's just the real, raw voices of democracy. So that was part of what we wanted people to pull from the record.

The tour kicked off in New Orleans; what was it like there?

It was very emotional. Very emotional. The funny thing is that the musicians [on *We Shall Overcome*] I'd met many years ago were playing in a zydeco and Cajun band—a lot of New Orleans influence. I met them in '97. When I invited them to play, slowly those Cajun rhythms... like in "Pay Me My Money Down," if you go to the Weavers record, which is where I found it, it's kind of a strumming folk song. But the minute I started to sing it, you can hear it on the record: the record starts off as kind of a straight folk thing, and then a little ways in you hear Larry Eagle, the drummer, shift into that *[taps out a rhythm]*, and all of a sudden it's New Orleans. And it's lovely, because it makes it into this enormous dance song. We end the show with it. It feels like it's really rocking, but what it's really doing is *swinging*. Deeply swinging.

The funny thing is, during the course of the evening we play all of the music that *leads* to rock music, but we don't play rock music. We go all the way up to '40s swing. All the music over the last 100 or 150 years actually was the roots of rock music, or led to rock music. Edgy characters—if you go back to the original voices in those folk songs, [they were] raw, unrefined, deeply emotional street voices. And so what we tried to put back in is—I wanted it to be this raucous, noisy folk sort of experience, a very barrelhouse, very bar, very street, very tavern interpretation of all this music. Because the characters were wild and raw—frontier characters. That was important.

But to get back to your question, New Orleans was very emotional. As we began to shape the show, we knew that was our first show, and we began to sort of shape it towards New Orleans.

What's the situation like there now?

Oh, it's terrible. I was shocked that ten months later, there's so much devastation. Things haven't been cleaned up—I mean, there's just totally destroyed neighborhood after neighborhood. You'd have to go to a war zone or the aftermath of some terrible disaster to see anything like it. I've never seen anything like it personally, and certainly nothing like it in an American city. Enormous parts of the city were simply drowned, houses ripped up off their foundations and just washed away. The city lost half of its population.

Are you angry at Bush for this?

Well, what happened is, if you go back to how the ball was dropped, FEMA, which is—without getting into detail—it's the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It was a functioning agency under the Clinton administration; it was a respected agency. But [Bush] came in, through political cronyism put people in charge that had no emergency experience, and basically corrupted what was a well-functioning agency. And when an actual emergency came, they were unprepared. So from the top, that's the way that they played the game; that's the way that he plays the game. But the thing is, you go and you see the results of those actions—days going by where people sat without help, people stranded in the city. People got on buses and planes and got off wherever they were taken.

Being there in New Orleans, do you have the impression that the government is caring about its people?

Well, they care about the people they care about! *[Laughs]* You know? Basically what happened in the last six years is, you had a small group of men who developed a particular ideology over a long period of time, who managed to get into power and impress their will on a very immature president and a guy who really shouldn't have had the job in the first place. Because if you look at what Bush did, he himself turned around 180 degrees and did things completely opposite from his campaign speeches that got him elected. I think the opportunity came with 9/11 where the public was fearful and insecure—that's when people look toward their government for direction and assistance, and these guys took that opportunity and they pushed the country in the direction that they wanted it to go. Which was very far to the right, in my opinion. They got the money going where they wanted it to go, which is to the very small, one percent of the population; they cut the taxes; they got the war that they'd been wanting to have. They were very effective in doing what they wanted to do—which unfortunately were terrible things. So it's just been a very frustrating and difficult time in the States.

But there are some signs that people have had enough and are fed up. Bush's ratings in the polls are disastrously low at the moment. And I think people are starting to realize that the country really got pulled—everywhere you turn: economically, you look at the tax cuts, you look at the war, in the areas of civil rights, there's been an *attack* on the basic, fundamental idea of our basic democratic values. And the closer America sticks to those things, generally, the better we do. When you get some guys that pull you far away from it, and I think it's who these guys were—that's just who they are—it's just been disastrous for people. So everybody's been struggling to try to change it, and hopefully in the next two and four years that'll happen.

MAY 17
FESTHALLE
FRANKFURT, GERMANY

SETLIST: Old Dan Tucker/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/John Henry/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Long Black Veil/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: Same songs as Amsterdam, with the first four shuffled. Frequent German guest Wolfgang Niedecken joins in for "Buffalo Gals."

FRANKFURTERS RELISH BRUCE: As expected, as we traveled back to more northerly climes, the crowd was never going to match the uninhibited self-expression of the Iberians—but they came mighty close, with an absolutely raucous welcome. Opening with "Old Dan Tucker" was a great touch, and it worked very well. —*Karl Birthistle*

WEAK LINK WOLFIE: The audience participation in the songs was very strong, and Bruce and the band seemed to enjoy themselves very much. I have to admit that I had been a little bit skeptical about the show. I liked *The Seeger Sessions*, but in concert I thought I'd miss the magic of Bruce's own songs. But I was completely wrong: many of the Bruce originals I was looking forward to actually work better in their original settings, and, to my surprise, the real highlights of the show were songs like "Old Dan Tucker," "Long Black Veil," and "Pay Me My Money Down."

Wolfgang Niedecken seemed to have some trouble with the lyrics on "Buffalo Gals." Niedecken is a local hero in Cologne but far from being very popular among the rest of the country. In the '80s and '90s he was quite successful with his band BAP, but today not many people are happy to see him at a Springsteen concert. Man, if I had the chance to join Bruce onstage, I'd learn every song he'd want me to sing within five minutes! —*Dirk Effing*

MAY 20
SPEKTRUM ARENA
OSLO, NORWAY

SETLIST: Old Dan Tucker/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/John Henry/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "My Father's House"

NOTES: While in Oslo, some of the band jam at a downtown blues bar, The Muddy Waters, while Bruce himself lays down a vocal track for "Bring 'Em Home" at a local studio. Springsteen arrived in Oslo on May 18, and he jokes with the audience: "We missed the National Day [May 17] by a day—we missed it, we came too late!... Somebody said there were parades, bands were playing and there were airhorns, and people drinking, and native costumes, and I thought it was for me... But they said no, no, it was the National Day."

The first "Devils & Dust" since Asbury Park is paired with "Mrs. McGrath" and replaces the setlisted "If I Should Fall Behind."

RELIGIOUS REAWAKENING: This was truly a great show, full of feeling and spirit, and with Bruce smiling from ear to ear throughout. Having seen 20-something shows, I rank this in the top three. "Devils & Dust" was a welcome tour premiere, with the backup singers really adding depth to the song. Bruce introduced the song commenting, "We've got a couple of songs about war, new and old. But they still have to be written, which is a shame."

I felt as if Bruce left us with hope and a religious awakening when he ended the *Devils & Dust* tour with "Dream Baby Dream" last year. With the *Seeger Sessions* tour he takes us further down the road to another religious awakening with gospel, soul, emotion, and pure joy!

—*Lars Oddvar Flugsrud*

MAY 21
HOVET ARENA
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/Long Black Veil/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Bring 'Em Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Turn! Turn! Turn!"

NOTES: The last show of the first European leg is a long set at 22 songs and over two-and-a-half hours. Springsteen thanks his Swedish fans and remarks of the European shows in general: "We had a wonderful time the past three weeks. I wish it could have been twice as long."

IN THE CROWD: Jimmy Page, in town to receive the Polar Music Prize

TOTALLY SWEDE: I was uncertain what to expect, but no more than two seconds into "John Henry" I knew this show wasn't going to be any different than any other Springsteen show in terms of energy, devotion, joy, and passion. The new musicians were well received by the audience. It's impressive how they are able to rock the joint with virtually no electrical instruments. They played their hearts out trying to match Springsteen himself.

Although quite a few of the songs performed this night had a strong political message, the feeling we left with was happiness. This show was fun, and with the well-reputed Swedish audience at peak performance, the "Swedish ass-rising" was once again on the agenda. And it did lift to the satisfaction of the man himself.

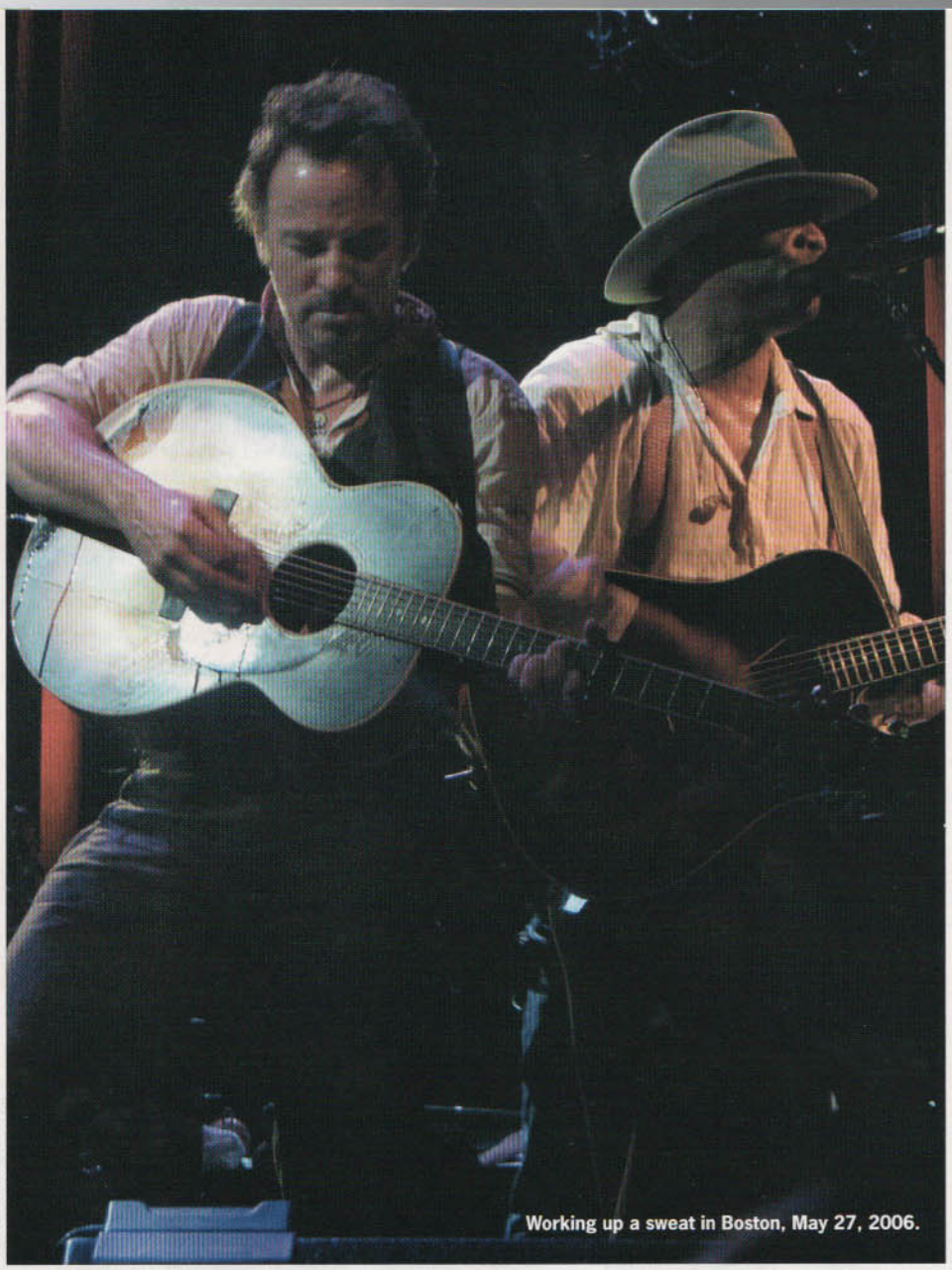
—*Tobias Sonestedt*

ARE YOU READY?: Bruce's introductions were a little longer than at other shows, and they were in English. Clearly catching onto the friendly rivalry between the Swedes and the Norwegians, Bruce exhorted the Stockholm crowd to sing at the top of their lungs on "Old Dan Tucker": "I have to say, we had some loud audiences on this tour. They were loud in Italy, and Spain was pretty loud. And I don't want to mention names, but *they* were pretty loud the other night too."

"Open All Night" was great, with Bruce firing up the audience a lot beforehand, asking the crowd three times: "Are you ready?... I don't think you're ready." "Pay Me" was fun, too, as Bruce chased Larry Eagle across the whole stage before he could catch him. He dedicated "Saints" as a prayer for New Orleans and a prayer for Stockholm. —*Jos Westenberg*

Wolfgang Niedecken, won't you come out tonight? Frankfurt, May 17, 2006.

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO



RUTH BAROHN PHOTO

Working up a sweat in Boston, May 27, 2006.

MAY 27
TWEETER CENTER
BOSTON, MA

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Dirty Water/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: The band's first U.S. date since their stunning turn at Jazz Fest in New Orleans. Patti is back with the band tonight, as are Mark Pender (trumpet) and Richie "LaBamba" Rosenberg (trombone), who join the European horn section halfway through to bring the horn count to six, and receive the baton from Ramm and Gayton for the rest of this U.S. tour.

"Bring 'Em Home" is played for the upcoming Memorial Day. "My City of Ruins" is dropped for the first time on tour. Peter Wolf guests for the last two songs.

AOL'S "18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": Beginning with "John Henry" from tonight's show, America Online hosts the video of a complete song from each night of the U.S. tour.

NEVER HAD SO MUCH FUN: This was not a show of quiet contemplation and acoustic music—it was one hell of a party. Sure, there were messages and political undertones to many songs, but it was all delivered with so much energy and *fun*. I've seen Bruce 15 times before tonight; I have never had so much fun at one of his shows. Bruce was clearly having the time of his life, too. For me, it was one of the most unusual Boss shows ever, and absolutely one of the best.

And it wouldn't be a Springsteen Boston show without "Dirty Water." Instead of the full-blown rock version we experienced both nights at Fenway Park, this "Dirty Water" (with friend Peter Wolf on hand once again) was also retooled into a blues/jazzy hybrid and riffed into "Buffalo Gals" with Peter dancing with Patti. What an incredible evening.

—Robert Gillis

MAY 28
NISSAN PAVILION
BRISTOW, VA

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/If I Should Fall Behind/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

NOTES: As in Boston, "Bring 'Em Home" is played for Memorial Day. On the outskirts of Washington, its first verse raised such a cheer from the crowd that Bruce had to pause and take a step back to let it die down before continuing.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Erie Canal"

A BRAND NEW HOUSE: As true Bruce fans, we've all seen the great Springsteen songs we love dozens of times. How incredible to see *brand new* songs, at least to Bruce's repertoire. That's what made this so special. I felt like I was seeing a new side of Bruce I had never seen. Sure, it was our Bruce, but it was also a Bruce who was doing songs he had never done because he wanted to sing them, and he wanted to do them and their authors justice, and justice to them he did. In spades. And goddamn, he looked so freakin' *happy* up there!

His line about "When Mama ain't happy, nobody's happy!" before an almost unrecognizable yet beautiful "If I Should Fall Behind" was hilarious and also moving. But the amazing thing was: I didn't really need any of these songs. I was in a new house tonight: it was a different kitchen, a different bedroom, a different porch. And I loved being there. I'll be back at the corner of E Street and Tenth Avenue soon enough.

Instead of preaching, Bruce let the more timely, politically-leaning songs speak simply for themselves. Listening to "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?," I can still see people on their roofs with scrawled banners that said "Help Us" as the water climbed up their walls in the Ninth Ward. Clearly, Bruce, as he did with *The Rising*, and has done with countless other societal hymns, put us all in the shoes of those less fortunate so we could feel their pain, as well as their potential salvation. And he didn't jam it down our throats this time. He let us feel it and make our own judgments and draw our own conclusions.

—Stephen H. Houk

MAY 30
GERMAIN AMPHITHEATRE
COLUMBUS, OH

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Bring 'Em Home/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand

Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Rag Mama Rag"

NOTES: "Bring 'Em Home" moves to the main set for a strong Memorial Day pairing with "Mrs. McGrath." Bruce premieres a cover of the Robbie Robertson-penned "Rag Mama Rag," from The Band's 1970 self-titled album. "Buffalo Gals" and "Ramrod" are listed on the setlist as possibles after "Saints," but a venue curfew cuts the night short at 20 songs.

A new bit of shtick: earlier on the tour, Bruce had laughed that they were playing everything but the kitchen sink on this tour, and one of these nights they'd have to actually bring one. True to his word, in Columbus, that's exactly what they do, as drummer Larry Eagle bashes away on some dishware.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "O Mary Don't You Weep"

THE FEW AND THE MIGHTY: Great show. I liked it more than DC, and I was not alone. The show had the smallest crowd I've ever seen, outside of Convention Hall in Asbury. "We are not great in numbers, but we are mighty!" he exclaimed. "Jesse James" was prefaced with, "This song is steeped, steeped, in a long history of bullshit." And out of left field, "Rag Mama Rag," introduced as an old song written by J.R. Robertson. *—Bryon Jordan*

PROVE IT ALL NIGHT: It's like his force of will from the '70s is returning as he is feeling the need, clearly, to prove to the audience this was worth the price of admission. And it most definitely is. I retract my earlier bitching about a lack of Bruce songs. This is the most fun I've had at a Bruce show in years. It was actually freeing not to be standing there hoping he'd play this or that; knowing what I was getting, going in, allowed me to stand there and just enjoy the sheer joy and energy exerted by this 57-year-old guy. *—Doug Baker*

MAY 31
VERIZON AMPHITHEATRE
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Froggie Went A Courtin'/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

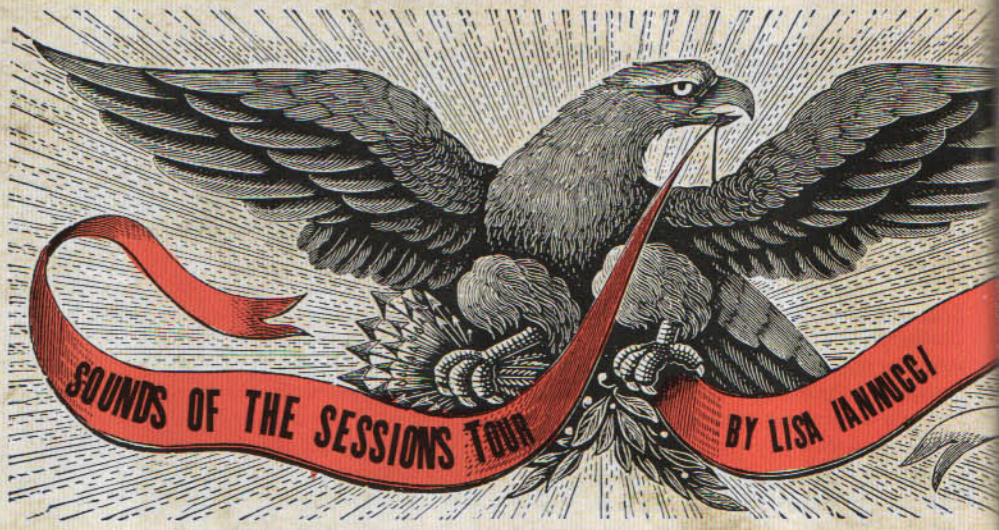
NOTES: Another show with low attendance, less than 4,000. The show opens with one of Springsteen's own tunes for the first time, the tour premiere of "Atlantic City." A second premiere, "Froggie Went A Courtin'," is played for a seven-year-old boy front-and-center holding out a stuffed frog.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Old Dan Tucker"

MONUMENTAL: "Atlantic City"—what an arrangement! This baby cooked, and the call-and-response at the end was one hell of a way to start the show. The show in general was monumental, the intensity and joy emanating from the stage was palpable. It's quite clear that this music and this band have reinvigorated Bruce, and it's paying off in spades. This show is just so damn musical! On paper, the size of this group of musicians may cause some to pause, but all I can tell you is this: it works. Boy, does it ever work. It's great watch-

"You talkin' to me?"
On the outskirts of DC, May 28, 2006.

GUY ACETO PHOTO



CAJUN: The folk music of Louisianans of Acadian heritage (French immigrants who originally settled in coastal Canada and eventually wound up in bayou country), it is usually performed in French and without amplification. Both accordion and fiddle figure prominently in Cajun music, and its catalog primarily consists of traditional ballads and laments performed as two-steps and waltzes.
KEY ARTISTS: Zachary Richard, The Balfa Brothers, Jo-El Sonnier.
SONGS: "Jolé Blon," "Jambalaya," "Allons à Lafayette."

ZYDECO: An accordion-based musical genre hailing from the prairies of south-central and southwest Louisiana. It is the popular music of the Creole culture (those of full or mixed African heritage), and is its most modern musical genre, having appeared after World War II. It draws heavily both from the R&B and Cajun musical traditions, and was until fairly recently performed in Cajun dialect. Despite its roots in the blues, it is widely considered Louisiana's' "party music," and is usually performed as a heavily percussive, rollicking two-step accompanied by washboard.
KEY ARTIST: Its most well-known performer was the undisputed "King of Zydeco," Clifton Chenier.
OTHER ARTISTS: Beausoleil, Rockin' Dopsie, Buckwheat Zydeco, Boozoo Chavis.
SONGS: "Eh, Petite Fille," "Bon Temps Roulet" and of course, "My Toot Toot"

DIXIELAND JAZZ: Most simply, the term "jazz" refers to popular ensemble music played by a band (brass section, drums, guitar, bass) in which a group of instruments or a single instrument improvises off the main theme while accompanied by the other instruments. In Dixieland jazz, the entire ensemble plays simultaneously with no one instrument being heard above another.
KEY ARTISTS: King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, Sidney Bechet, Kid Ory.
SONGS: "Basin Street Blues," "When the Saints Go Marching In," "Beale Street Blues," "Sweet Georgia Brown."

SECOND LINE: Terminology derived from traditional New Orleans parades. The "first line" of a parade consists of its participants—musicians and so on. Thus, the Second Line would be the dancing spectators that follow along behind them in the parade, wielding umbrellas and handkerchiefs and breaking out into spontaneous dancing and celebration. Second Line refers to the street dances themselves that grew from these traditional African-American parades, as well as the music that accompanies them. It is brass marching band music (complete with a tuba and big bass drums) and is most often present at New Orleans' famous jazz funerals, at which participants unofficially compete amongst themselves to determine who can send off a departed loved one in the grandest, most flamboyant fashion. The music differs from traditional Dixieland jazz in that its backbeat is less rigid; it relies heavily upon improvisation and funked-up interpretations of modern pop songs. It is most commonly referred to as "New Orleans jazz" and is considered the true sound of the Crescent City.
KEY ARTISTS: Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Preservation Hall Jazz Band
SONGS: "Bill Bailey," "St. James Infirmary," "Down by the Riverside"

WESTERN SWING: Always performed by a big band, swing is an up-tempo offshoot of jazz featuring a driving backbeat and more precise orchestration and vocals. The term also refers to the energetic improvisational dances that were created in response to this highly engaging music. As it traveled west, swing music assumed the instrumentation characteristic of the region—fiddles and pedal steel guitar.
KEY ARTIST: Perhaps the most well-known purveyor of this genre was Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys.
OTHER ARTISTS: Spade Cooley, Tex Williams, Asleep at the Wheel, Speedy West & Jimmy Bryant.
SONGS: "San Antonio Rose," "South of the Border (Down Mexico Way)," "Milk Cow Blues," "Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)"

BOOGIE-WOOGIE: Popularized during World War II, boogie-woogie is a swing-based music that originated on the piano, with artists like Pinetop Smith, and progressed to a more sophisticated style that features the close vocal harmonies and bluesy chord progressions that later became the bedrock of early rock 'n' roll and doo-wop. Just about every major bandleader of the era worked up his own version of this hugely popular genre.
KEY ARTISTS: Albert Ammons, Artie Shaw, Woody Herman, Jimmy Yancey, Benny Goodman, The Andrews Sisters.
SONGS: "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "Crescent City Blues"

JUMP BLUES: Very closely related to swing as well as to early R&B, jump blues features a big band, jazzy saxophone/brass sound, driving rhythm, and prominent, shouted vocals. Unlike standard blues—in which the guitar is the lead instrument—jump blues incorporates the guitar into the mix.
KEY ARTISTS: Louis Prima, Louis Jordan, Big Joe Turner, Amos Milburn.
SONGS: "Let the Good Times Roll," "Caldonia," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," "Honey Hush," "Down the Road a Piece."

PROFESSOR LONGHAIR & THE LOUISIANA PIANO TRADITION: Bruce's reverence for this legendary Louisiana performer is unquestionable, and the echoes of this style can be heard in the work of Allen Toussaint and Fats Domino (another Bruce favorite), as well as in the early rock 'n' roll of Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard. In this music, the ragtime piano style is embellished by extended improvisation and dramatic flourishes such as the glissando, and played with spectacular power and dexterity. It combines mainstream blues and boogie-woogie with Afro-Caribbean rumba rhythms to produce a driving, percussive sound.
KEY ARTISTS: Tuts Washington, Huey "Piano" Smith, Champion Jack Dupree, Dr. John.
SONGS: "Stagger Lee," "Junko Partner," "Mardi Gras in New Orleans."

CELTIC: Though it is officially defined as the traditional music of the Celtic peoples of all of western Europe, the term is most often used in reference to Irish and Scottish folk music. Polkas and jigs are common here, as are ballads and chanteys, and all are typically performed on flute, mandolin and fiddle, and without amplification.
KEY ARTISTS: The Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem, Clannad.
SONGS: Too numerous to mention. Seriously.

BLUEGRASS: An entirely American invention, bluegrass is the traditional music of Appalachia. It is performed on acoustic string instruments, and prominently features banjo, fiddle and upright bass. The bluegrass tradition draws heavily upon the Celtic ballads brought over by Irish and Scotch immigrants, and its catalog is laden with tales of tribulation, violence and bloodshed. Its two-steps and waltzes are often performed in a high-pitched (or "high lonesome") vocal style as originated by its founding father, Bill Monroe.
OTHER ARTISTS: The Stanley Brothers, Flatt & Scruggs, Alison Krauss.
SONGS: "Pretty Polly," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Foggy Mountain Breakdown," "Orange Blossom Special," "Nine Pound Hammer."

SEA CHANTEY: Performed aboard ships at sea, chanteys served the work song's primary purposes of passing the time and of synchronizing the movements of laborers (sailors) as they performed their monotonous and backbreaking work—keeping their vessel afloat and on course. As with most work songs, they feature a repetitive call-and-response chorus designed to keep everyone actively engaged in the performance, and are often humorous and/or bawdy in nature.
SONGS: "Blow the Man Down," "Drunken Sailor"

ing Bruce play off of the various members of this most versatile band. Big ups especially to the *incredible* horns, banjo, accordion/piano, and the bass player, who I think was having more fun than anybody else on stage, save Bruce.

Folk, gospel, swamp jazz, soul. It stirs, it swings, it rocks, it rolls. This is unlike anything Bruce has ever done, and this is *exactly* what Bruce has always done: playing with passion and force, and playing like he means it, while offering up moments of transcendence unlike anybody else around. These moments are the reason we're all here, and they were to be found throughout the show. *—Kirk J. Marley*

JUNE 3
GLENDALE ARENA
PHOENIX, AZ

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/ Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Erie Canal/ My Oklahoma Home/Bring 'Em Home/ Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: A half-full indoor arena, the first indoor show of this leg. Arizona resident E Streeter Nils Lofgren is in the house, joining the band to sing and strum on "Pay Me My Money Down." "Ramrod" is an audible in the encore.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Jesse James"

LEAP OF FAITH: At the end of "Pay Me My Money Down," after parading most of the band (including Nils) offstage, only the tuba player and drummer were left playing. Suddenly there was a bit of a commotion on the right side of the pit, and I looked over and saw Bruce walking into it, playing his guitar. Of course, he was swarmed and immediately made his way back to behind the stage. It was a brief visit, but a nice taste of the old days and his ventures into the crowd. *—Chad Silver*

Phoenix, June 3, 2006.

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

JUNE 5
NBC STUDIOS
BURBANK, CA

SETLIST: How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?

NOTES: In the afternoon, Bruce and the Band tape a guest performance on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno.*

GREEK THEATRE
LOS ANGELES, CA

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/Erie Canal/ My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/ Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down// Bring 'Em Home/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

SOUNDCHECK: A lengthy soundcheck starts late (likely due to the *Tonight Show* taping) and runs about an hour. Early arrivals get a rare treat, catching a few songs on the various TV monitors in the concessions area as the cameras are being tested out.

NOTES: Brother Springsteen's traveling salvation show comes to the Greek Theatre, home of *Hot August Night*. The second show in a row with an E Street guest, as Roy Bittan plays on "Pay Me My Money Down."

IN THE CROWD: Warren Littlefield, Willie Garson *(Sex and the City)*, Dorian Harewood, Tom Hanks, Tim Robbins, Richard Lewis, James Burrows, James Denton *(Desperate Housewives)*, Henry Kissinger's son.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"

DO YOU WANNA DANCE?: Bruce chastised the non-singing, non-dancing L.A. audience several times. Before "Old Dan Tucker" he said he was almost afraid to ask the crowd to sing. "You think you're too cool to sing with your white stretch Humvees. C'mon, let's check out those Los Angeles vocal cords!"

After "Eyes On The Prize," Bruce introduced Marc Anthony Thompson and spoke to any record executives there might be in the crowd, imploring them to sign Chocolate Genius and get those records out. He then added, "It's the least I can do."

The highlight of the night, hands down, was "Pay Me My Money Down" featuring Roy Bittan! Bruce called for a Professor solo and liked it so much he had him do it again. In the

middle of the song Bruce came to the front of the stage with Charlie Giordano and shouted, "Look, Charlie. I don't believe it. They're up and dancing!" (By this point he was overdoing the L.A. crowd thing. It was actually a pretty good audience.) For the finale, when everyone files off leaving the drums and the tuba, Bruce came back and physically dragged tuba man Art Baron off the stage, leaving Roy and drummer Larry Eagle. He then returned and dragged Larry from the drum riser, leaving the Professor all by himself banging it out on the old upright. It sounded *great*. Bruce was hanging right next to Roy with a huge grin on his face and was yelling stuff at Roy off-mic. For the big finish, Bruce played the last chord along with Roy, by dragging his elbow down the keyboard. He was cracking up as he escorted Roy from the stage. A truly special moment.

—Robert Bader

JUNE 6
SLEEP TRAIN PAVILION
CONCORD, CA

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Ramrod/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/Froggie Went A Courtin'/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: Joan Baez gets a roar from the Bay Area crowd as she takes her seat before the show. She later joins Bruce on stage (along with another guest, Bruce's nephew Nicky on guitar) for "Pay Me My Money Down." The encore stretches to six songs, with another "Froggie" audible brought on by another stuffed frog.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Bring 'Em Home"

A FIRST CONCERT TO REMEMBER: As a huge fan, I can say that the show was, as always, a true Bruce experience. It was a kickin' time. Lots of stand-outs, but the most amazing moment for me, my husband and my nine-year-old daughter, Arielle, was when he sang "Froggie Went A Courtin'" for us. During "Pay Me My Money Down" he invited those in the front rows to come down to the stage; we were lucky enough to wind up right against it. During "You Can Look" he noticed the big frog stuffed animal that Arielle brought and pointed and gave her a big smile. After he finished the song, he took the frog up on stage and put it by the drums and proceeded to sing "Froggie" right to us. He was looking us in the eyes for the whole song!

It was the most incredible feeling—Bruce sang a song to my daughter! I just stood there hugging her, singing the song with the biggest smile on my face and tears in my eyes! It was the first concert my kids have been to. Arielle will have this amazing memory for the rest of her life. And he did give her the frog back at the end of the show! *—Eden Brodsky*

St. Paul, June 11, 2006.

JUNE 10
WELLS FARGO ARENA
DES MOINES, IA

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: A similar set to Concord, substituting "My City of Ruins" for "Bring 'Em Home," and dropping "Froggie." Mark Pender, from nearby Kansas City, gets to shine tonight; Bruce throws him the solo in "Saints."

IN THE CROWD: Pender's mother; Bruce makes sure to point her out.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Mrs. McGrath"

BETTER LATE?: There was no pit in Des Moines, just one open floor—which was only about one-third full. The upper-level seats were not sold, and there were large areas of empty seats at the end of the lower level. And the late starts (8:20 or later for shows billed as a 7:30 start) are really annoying. While the die-hards clearly know when the show really starts, the casual fan shows up on time and waits and waits. On WCCO radio this morning, the late start was a bigger topic than the music itself. This seems self-defeating when you're trying to introduce something new to a large audience.

—Yoji Shimizu

STORYTELLER: Bruce said that he noticed he was in town at the same time as the World Pork Festival: "Pork Festival in Iowa? I guess it's kind of like coming to New Jersey while there is a Mafia convention going on!" he said. "Or the Polluter's Ball!" This led him to tell a story about a couple of pet pigs he once owned. He had a big one that his kids would ride and a small Vietnamese potbelly pig "that was the foulest, smelliest creature ever." He told how the big pig killed the small one "so, I guess that's not such a happy story," he said with a laugh. *—Mark Stitt*

JUNE 11
XCEL ARENA
ST. PAUL, MN

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Johnny 99/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Long Black Veil/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

SOUNDCHECK: Includes an Irish-tinged "Further On (Up the Road)."

NOTES: "O Mary" moves to the opening slot it last had in DC, and "Long Black Veil" gets its first airing since Europe. "Buffalo Gals" returns to close the show, with Bruce telling the crowd, "Thanks for taking a chance on us."

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Jacob's Ladder"

MUSIC BEING MADE: I have had the pleasure of seeing Bruce on each of his last five visits to Minnesota, and every time I have seen him perform an entirely new show, each with its own energy, excitement and memories. The show with the Seeger Sessions Band was amazing.

A new arrangement of "My Oklahoma Home" was interesting to watch. After the first verse, Bruce casually told the band that he would sing the second verse by himself; when he finished it, he simply instructed the band to "take it easy," and one-by-one they came in quietly. It was a wonderful example of seeing what Bruce meant when he said that the *Seeger Sessions* album is the sound of music being made, not played.

Chocolate Genius! Chocolate Genius! Chocolate Genius! Who is this man? His voice is beautiful! And for that matter, kudos to Bruce for sharing the spotlight with all of the singers in the band; bringing them down to center stage and letting them shine, giving a real sense of community.

An observation: A couple of times during the evening, Bruce and the band seemed to be working extremely hard to get people up out of their seats; at one point he hollered, "I see some people in their seats over there! That's against the Minnesota code of ethics!" I couldn't help wondering if maybe people were confused. Last year when Bruce played St. Paul, he asked everyone to be quiet and stay seated.... Perhaps this audience thought the same rules were in effect? —*Kurt Petersen*

JUNE 13
FIRST MIDWEST BANK AMPHITHEATRE
TINLEY PARK, IL

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/Johnny 99/Eyes on the Prize/My Oklahoma Home/Long Black Veil/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/Buffalo Gals

SOUNDCHECK: Includes more work on "Further On (Up the Road)"

NOTES: The tour premiere of "Further" has Art Baron exchanging his tuba for the flute. "Art is king of the highest instrument and the lowest instrument in the band," says Bruce. "He's known as Art Hi-Lo."

IN THE CROWD: Larry Eagle's mother

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "My Oklahoma Home"

VERSATILITY AND POWER: A much larger crowd than in Indy, and the audience seemed very responsive from the get-go. Bruce came out on fire, and the Seeger Sessions Band kept pace. I just cannot say enough about the versatility and power of this group. The horns are a force of nature, and the vocalists add many shades of emotion throughout. Marc Anthony Thompson is a perfect complement to Bruce when he steps up to trade vocals. His voice is so evocative and simply oozes soul.

The arrangements of Bruce's older material were incredible. "Atlantic City" picked up even more power since its debut in Indy. It rocked and steamrolled, and the "Meet me tonight!" call-and-response ending was fantastic. Completely overhauled was "Further On (Up the Road)," delivered as an audible: "This is a song we haven't quite worked out yet—let's give it a shot." There was a great opening vocal turn by Cindy Mizelle, and nice vocal trade-offs from Marc, Lisa, Curtis, and Frank toward the end. This Irish-flavored version was a terrific surprise. —*Kirk J. Marley*

BUFFALO GALS ~~ROSALITA~~ WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT?

On the eve of the Seeger Sessions tour debut, Springsteen told interviewer Dave Marsh just what it was that inspired him to learn to play guitar in the early 1960s: A group of guys who joined up at the beach every Sunday, sat in a circle and played simple folk songs like "If I Had a Hammer." It was the desire to join that circle, "to find my place... and strum along," that motivated him to master his first two-chord fingerings.

The term *folk music* means different things to different people. To longtime Boss fan and Chicago folk musician Mark Dvorak, the essence of folk music lies in what Bruce referred to as "joining the circle"—the idea that the music springs forth from a community, or even a family, context.

"Pete Seeger made a video of different examples of folk music around the world," Dvorak recalls. "One segment was this big family of Irish people—father's playing the fiddle, mother's playing the flute, somebody's on the accordion, the kids have something, all ages are all playing together. And they all play melody. Then he shows another scene from when he visited Appalachia—same thing."

Dvorak knows what the folk he's talking about. He plays banjo and sings Seeger's parts as a member of Weavermania, a tribute band that pays homage to Pete's immensely popular band of the '50s, The Weavers. As much as he appreciates the music, Dvorak also admires Seeger's lifetime of advocating for the community-building that's implicit in folk music.

Dvorak, left, with Weavermania

With the Seeger Sessions album and tour, Springsteen has made choices that evoke the spirit of Seeger's work. "Bruce uses relatively unknown musicians, rather than a 'supergroup,'" Dvorak points out. "And in the [album cover] photograph, Bruce is pictured as one among the many musicians who performed on the CD, almost as if they are posing for a family portrait."

The group dynamic in his recent performances is similar to what Seeger documented in people's homes in Ireland and Appalachia. While never far from the center of attention, Springsteen shares the limelight to an unprecedented extent, with band members getting plenty of chances to step to the front for a solo. The songs played on this tour are very simple structurally—most weigh in at just three or four chords. Yet "the arrangements are thick," Dvorak notes. "Lots of instruments, lots of different sounds, lots of rhythms, lots of voices."

Dvorak teaches a folk ensemble class at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music, and despite the participants' status as amateurs, the energy in class is not so different from what radiates from Springsteen's stage. "We've done 'Pay Me My Money Down'—two chords, sure, we can play that!" he says. "I look for what we have in common. If the less-experienced people can only play two chords, then the experienced people can play the lead, and the harmony singers can come in. This is how people make music."

In Chicago, fans seemed to get swept up in it, even though some tunes may have been new to them. The last time the Boss played an outdoor show here, three years prior, he and the E Street Band had fans dancing in the bleachers of U.S. Cellular Field with "Rosalita" as an encore. The scene in the pit was about the same this time outside the Windy City at the First Midwest Amphitheatre. But the encore responsible for the pumping fists and happy feet was... "Buffalo Gals."

"Buffalo Gals"? What's up with that, Mark?

"There is a lot of soul and drama in those old ballads," Dvorak says. "I think people identify with this music on a very deep level, whether they know it or not. We're very programmed as consumers of records and performers to just sit there and listen, but the rhythms of this set—there are Irish rhythms, there are spirituals, there's bluegrass, there's jazz—it's very diverse, and I think people catch on to that."

—*Roderick Jones*

JUNE 14
BRADLEY CENTER
MILWAUKEE, WI

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Further On (Up the Road)/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: In a spontaneous moment, when Bruce's guitar breaks at the beginning of "Jesse James," he turns down Kevin Buell's offer of another, un-slings the dead one, and does the rest of the song hands-free, throwing himself into the vocal and getting great solos out of the band. "Cadillac Ranch" returns to the set, getting cheers on this "Wisconsin night."

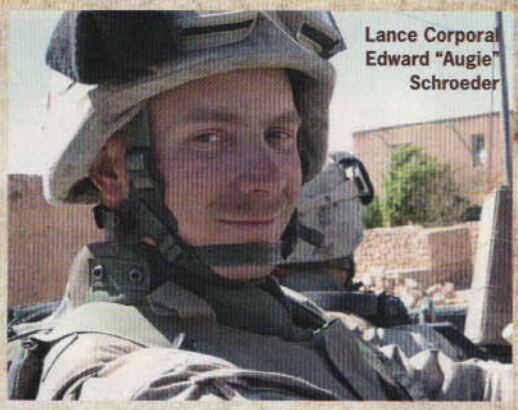
"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Eyes on the Prize"

PERFECTLY GOOD GUITARS: It is amazing how much energy Bruce still has, and it is clear that his guitars take a beating from it. His fast and powerful strumming have made one of his Takamine acoustics look like the old Esquire. The man looked good, a thinning yet solid frame, and more energy than a teenager. It was nice to see such a responsive crowd as well, and Bruce's smile let us know that he was grateful.

—Ian Seaholm

INTO THE FIRE

"YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP"



Lance Corporal Edward "Augie" Schroeder

Bruce Springsteen showed a Blossom Music Center audience that he had the power to bring a large concert pavilion to complete silence. He did that after mentioning a request from Linda Herbkersman of Cleveland that he dedicate "Into the Fire" to the Third Battalion, 25th Marines and to our son, Lance Corporal Edward "Augie" Schroeder, who was killed in Iraq in 2005.

Bruce mentioned that the unit, headquartered in the Cleveland suburb of Brook Park, had lost 48 men during its seven-month deployment in Iraq in 2005, including 19 in two days. Fourteen of those, including Augie, were killed in a single explosion on August 3.

"You could hear a pin drop when Bruce mentioned the Third Battalion," said Clevelander Pat Sweeney. "That's not easy to do in an outdoor pavilion."

"I was so moved by the dedication and 'Into the Fire' that I didn't even notice Bruce sang 'We Shall Overcome' next," Linda said. "I was just overwhelmed."

In making the dedication, Bruce said we so often forget the names and the faces of those killed in action because it's always someone else's children.

Augie's mother, Rosemary Palmer, and I have spent most of our time since August 2005 keeping his name and face in the foreground so people won't forget him or the more than 4,000 American troops killed in Iraq since March 2003 [as of this writing].

This is done through Families of the Fallen for Change (www.fofchange.org), a non-profit organization we founded to push for a responsible end to the war. More than 1,300 members nationwide have joined: supporters of the organization's efforts, military families, friends of the fallen, or families of the fallen. They come from all walks of life and different political persuasions. About half are veterans, some high-ranking retired officers who do not like what they see happening to the American military. Many are parents whose children are about to be or have recently been deployed to Iraq. Membership is free, carries no obligation, and is kept confidential. Anyone can sign up at our website.

We are truly grateful for Bruce's kindness in making the dedication, because we need all the help we can get convincing Americans that this war is futile and to demand an end to it.

The night before he deployed, we told Augie that if something happened to him we would not keep quiet about it. So we will continue speaking against this war until it is over, moving "into the fire" of any criticism for our opposition. As the song goes,

May your strength give us strength, strength to keep pushing Americans to understand that this is the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.

May your faith give us faith, faith that a handful of people can truly make a difference.

May your hope give us hope, hope that this war, which has cost so much blood and treasure with little to show for it, ends soon.

May your love give us love, love for those who serve; love for those who are injured; love for those who have fallen; love for families, which either worry or mourn; love for this country, which has somehow gone astray; and love, always, for Augie.

—Paul E. Schroeder
Families of the Fallen for Change

JUNE 16
BLOSSOM MUSIC CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Long Time Comin'/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Into the Fire/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/Ramrod/When the Saints Go Marching In

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Long Time Comin'"

NOTES: Bruce dedicates "Long Time Comin'" to his son Evan, who is in attendance, and warns: "Everyone should guard their daughters!" "Into the Fire" is the first solo performance of the tour, with Springsteen on 12-string as the band stands behind him on stage. He dedicates the song, honoring a request he received by letter, to Lance Cpl. Edward August Schroeder and the local Marine unit based in Brook Park, Ohio. Springsteen gives a plug to the local food bank as usual, adding that a local anti-death penalty group has a table set up as well: "Whatever your beliefs, you should stop and see what they have to say."

IN THE CROWD: Eric Carmen

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "We Shall Overcome"

BRING THE KIDS ALONG!: What can I say, a beautiful evening under the stars and introducing my youngest daughter to the joys of a live performance. We were lucky enough to win lawn seats from a local radio show, then to have Bruce say, "Bring the kids along, on the house!" just made for an unbelievable treat.

The sweetest part of the night had to be seeing the joy shared between generations. Whether it was our own seven- and 11-year-olds, or the grandfather next to us on the lawn, this night showed that there truly is magic in the night. Music breaks down all age, race, and gender barriers; and this was an evening to enjoy the freedoms we all too often take for granted. *—Dennis White*

YOU CAN'T SIT DOWN: The thing that struck me about the Blossom show was how great a bandleader Bruce is. While his other strengths (songwriting, guitar playing) get discussed regularly, the way this band was performing is nothing short of amazing. Everyone on stage had a chance to bring something to the proceedings *and* have a moment or three in the spotlight. The *Seeger Sessions* songs were better than the recorded versions, if only because their energy level was that much higher, and Bruce's songs were a treat just because their arrangements were so unique. "Ramrod" and particularly "Open All Night" stand out (*why* isn't this song played more often?).*—Kerry Jevsevar*

BLOOD BROTHERS: It was masterful the way he brought us back to reality by dedicating "Into the Fire" to the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines. Bruce made some personal and obviously heartfelt comments ["You can forget the names, you can forget the faces... but when

it's your son or daughter, you never forget the loss"] before singing solo on a darkened stage. It was an amazing tribute to those who gave everything they had in the war. At the end, I wasn't sure whether to jump to my feet and applaud, or break down and cry. And of course, "Bring 'Em Home" had an especially deep meaning for this area. —*Linda Herbkersman*

JUNE 17
DTE ENERGY CENTER
DETROIT, MI

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Further On (Up the Road)/Long Time Comin'/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/Ramrod/When the Saints Go Marching In

IN THE CROWD: Dave Marsh's mother, to whom Bruce dedicates "We Shall Overcome"

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Maria's Bed"

NOTES: Well-attended, with the biggest lawn crowd so far on the tour (though no pit). A very similar set to Cleveland, with "Further On (Up the Road)" in and "Into the Fire" out.

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Pay Me My Money Down"

THE HORNS' BIGGEST FAN: A revealing scene caught my eye midway through the show. From my vantage point (front row, far stage left), I saw Springsteen with his back to the audience looking at the horn section. He had the most joyful look on his face—not mugging for the crowd (as of course he sometimes does) because hardly anyone could see him. He was just enjoying *their* music so much, even though he hears it on an almost nightly basis. "Long Time Comin'" was made for this band, and as the night before, Springsteen dedicated the song to son Evan, joking, "He went to bed at 10 last night...10 a.m.!" —*Dan Busto*

BETTER SHOW, WORSE CROWDS: The version of "Atlantic City" is one of the best I have heard, a fantastic arrangement. But it is also the only Bruce song that can stand up with the American classics at these shows, with the possible exception of "Open All Night." Sorry, but I think the arrangements of "Cadillac Ranch" and "Ramrod" are simply inferior. After seeing a couple of U.S. shows over the last years, I must say that the European crowds are much more appreciative. While people clearly enjoyed the show in Detroit, there was a constant and annoying level of people leaving for drinks and "Brooocing." The folks next to us left seven times (!) during the show to get more beers, and they also kept shouting the usual crap ("New Jersey!" "Rosie!"). In Frankfurt this year and Dusseldorf last year, Bruce thanked the audience for its openness toward him making new music. I haven't heard him say that at any of the U.S. shows I've attended.

—*Robert Urtheil*

Cleveland, June 16, 2006.

GUY ACETO PHOTO

JUNE 19
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
SARATOGA, NY

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Further On (Up the Road)/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/Buffalo Gals/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: Though Springsteen doesn't seem to recall it himself, the show marks his return to this venue after more than two decades, since early on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. He remarks, "We must be in folk country now... I know Pete's a couple hours away, and his ears must be ringing!" There is no appearance from Seeger himself, but Springsteen takes a moment before "We Shall Overcome" to observe his legacy of keeping these songs alive.

IN THE CROWD: Charlie Giordano's relatives, with a "We [heart] Uncle Charlie" banner, get lots of attention from Bruce, especially when it comes time for Charlie's accordion solo on "Pay Me."

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Buffalo Gals"

INTO THE WOODS: It was especially poignant to hear "Erie Canal" in Saratoga, just miles from its Albany endpoint, and the outdoor setting—the amphitheater is surrounded by lush woods—evoked the music's Appalachian and rural roots. —*Carl MacGowan*

MARK CLIFFORD: BANJO'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

BY ANTHONY D'AMATO

ANTHONY D'AMATO PHOTO

In 1975, Mark Clifford rented an inexpensive Japanese-made banjo from a music shop in Dover, New Jersey. "You'll never learn how to play that thing," Clifford's girlfriend told him as he relentlessly practiced right-hand rolls over and over again in his apartment. Fortunately, she was wrong.

With a sound strongly influenced by bluegrass icons like Earl Scruggs and Tony Trischka, Clifford deftly weaves his banjo playing in and out of songs throughout the *Seeger Sessions* album. His left hand flows effortlessly up and down the neck as he plays, providing the melodic underpinning to tracks like "Erie Canal" and "My Oklahoma Home," while tastefully stepping up to the spotlight for fills and solos, taking the lead on the album's opening and closing songs, "Old Dan Tucker" and "Froggie Went A Courtin'." Clifford's right hand picks through complex patterns with the precision and timing of a finely tuned machine, but never without feeling, ranging in sound from giddy and rollicking to somber and sensitive. There's no doubt about it, Mark Clifford is an extraordinary player with musical sensibilities in a number of styles. Listening to his playing might understandably lead you to believe he must be a very popular performer and studio musician.

"I don't want to say my musical career is over," reflects 54-year-old Clifford, "but most of my playing is done in the living room rather than in front of an audience."

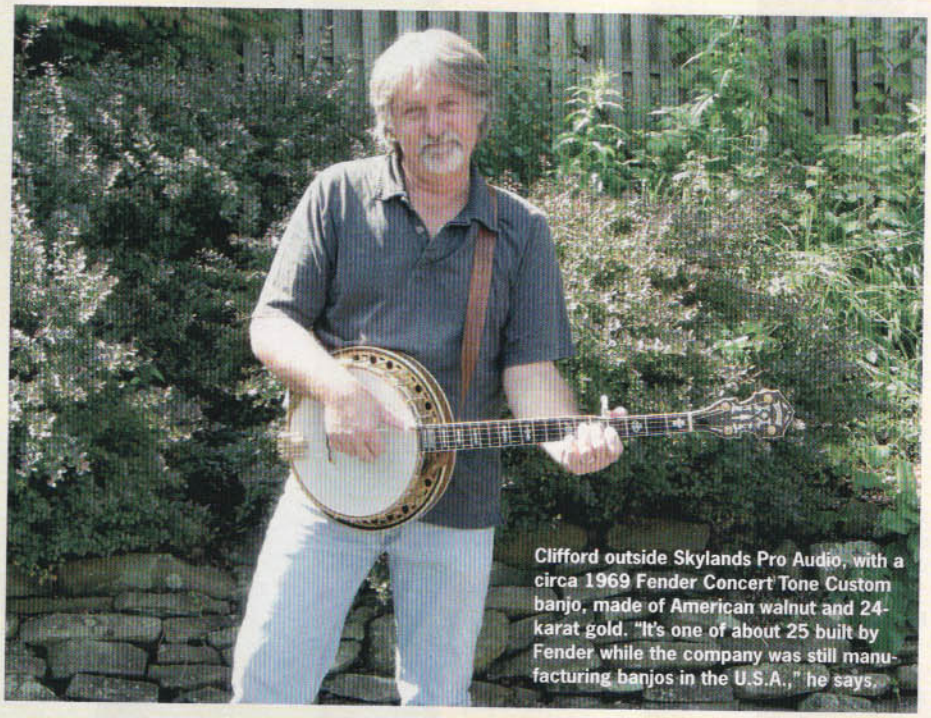
The plain and simple facts are that nowadays, Clifford is more well known for Skylands Pro Audio, his small, northern New Jersey live audio production company, than he is for his banjo playing. So how did a virtual unknown end up playing for one of the biggest names in rock 'n' roll?

When Bruce Springsteen put together a group to back him up for the original 1997 recording session for *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*, the Pete Seeger tribute album that inspired what would eventually become the *Seeger Sessions* project, it quickly became apparent that he didn't have any banjo players to call on. Longtime Springsteen guitar tech Kevin Buell mentioned that very fact to Bob Pinto, another talented guitar tech and owner of Bob's Guitar Hospital at Monmouth Music in Red Bank, New Jersey.

"Bob and I worked together for a stringed instrument distributor called Mizell Music in Springfield [New Jersey]," explains Clifford of his connection to Pinto, whom he met in the late 1970s. "He was actually my boss there."

The two never lost touch, and remembering his talented former co-worker, Pinto immediately suggested Clifford for the banjo position.

"I only knew one banjo player really well that I could recommend without hesitation," says Pinto over the phone from his Red Bank repair shop. "We played together here and there, and I knew he was great," he continues of Clifford. "He's one of the best I ever heard that wasn't really famous."



Clifford outside Skylands Pro Audio, with a circa 1969 Fender Concert Tone Custom banjo, made of American walnut and 24-karat gold. "It's one of about 25 built by Fender while the company was still manufacturing banjos in the U.S.A.," he says.

Word of Pinto's recommendation got back to Springsteen, and it wasn't long before Clifford got a rather unexpected call from Bruce's right-hand man, Terry Magovern.

"Terry called and started asking me, 'Do you play the banjo?' and I said, 'Well, sure,'" remembers Clifford with a laugh. "And he goes, 'Do you do recording sessions?' and I said, 'Sure, I've done some sessions and commercials and things like that.'"

It all seemed a little mysterious to Clifford, who had some questions of his own for Magovern.

"Can you tell me anything about it?" Clifford asked. "Do you know anything about the songs that are in the session, what keys they're in… any recordings in advance?"

The answers were straight "No"s across the board.

The one bit of information Magovern did share was that a few of the tunes were planned for the key of F.

"The key of F on the bluegrass banjo is not a real friendly place," explains Clifford. "I mean, there are a lot of tunes in F in bluegrass music, but most of the time they're not featured banjo tunes because F is a whole step below the open tuning of the banjo. So in anticipation of that, I took my Gibson Earl Scruggs model banjo and I tuned it down a whole step to an open F chord, and I went to the session with that and my Baldwin banjo, which was tuned up to an open G. So I was ready for everything."

Clifford arrived to the first session early and was pleasantly surprised to find out he had his choice of recording setups.

"I walked into this studio, and it was the living room of the house, and there were preliminary setups all over the place," he remembers. "I was there really early, saw where Bruce's mic was, and I saw an empty spot like five feet away from him right there where I knew I would be in the action—not on the other side of the room wondering what was going on. And that was the one I stuck with for all three sessions."

"It was a great spot to be in," Clifford continues. "It was close, and communication was excellent. I was able to lock up with Bruce's guitar acoustically without having to rely on studio monitoring and headphones—that made it a lot easier; it made communication a lot better. And in a totally improvised session like that, I really need that personal contact, that open air that lets you lock up with other musicians and really feel the groove."

The only familiar face in the studio was Soozie Tyrell, with whom Clifford had shared a bill on occasion back in the days when he performed professionally with his group, The Clover Hill Band.

"We used to do a double bill," remembers Clifford. "We'd share the stage with Soozie's band [High in the Saddle]; we'd do a set and she'd do a set."

"We were always really impressed by her band," Clifford says of their days playing the Crystal Palace in Paramus, NJ, together. "Soozie's presence was always really strong in front of the band. But meeting her at the Seeger Sessions made it

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

"I saw an empty spot five feet away from Bruce, where I knew I would be in the action... and that was the one I stuck with for all three sessions."

less intimidating for me, because I didn't know anyone in the session. I certainly hadn't met Bruce before. I had no idea what to expect because I'd never known Bruce Springsteen to do anything remotely like the *Seeger Sessions*. It was a whole new direction. I just didn't know what to expect. I went there with my two banjos and just waited for him to give instructions."

There were plenty of instructions in that first session, which turned into a marathon day of work for the band, especially Clifford.

"We played 'til almost midnight that night," he recounts. "It was a very long day in the studio, probably eleven-and-a-half hours, and everyone was leaving, including myself—my instruments were packed up, I was taking them out to the car—and Bruce stuck his head out the door."

"Hey Mark, c'mon back in here," Springsteen called, "I wanna put banjo down on 'We Shall Overcome,'" a song which he had originally chosen to omit the instrument from.

"I knew it was going to be difficult," says Clifford of the slow piece, "because it wasn't a tempo I was accustomed to playing bluegrass banjo in. I went back in and did overdubs, and honestly," he confesses, "I felt really weak. I didn't feel real confident with the part... but I went ahead and did it, and I did several takes, and Bruce was going, 'Don't worry, I just wanna get that sound, I just wanna hear that banjo sound, that's what I want.'"

When *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* came out, Clifford was anxious to find out which song was chosen from their recording session.

"I was anticipating, 'What cut was it gonna be? What cut was it gonna be?' and then of course it's 'We Shall Overcome,' the one I felt least comfortable with. I opened up the record, and there it was: 'Mark Clifford, banjo.' And then I put on 'We Shall Overcome,'" Clifford remembers, pausing in his story and with a slight grin.

"Not a lick. The overdub never made it onto the final mix... although my name's in print on the record," he says with a chuckle. (Those banjo overdubs eventually surfaced again during the mixing of the full *Seeger Sessions* album and actually are included on the record.)

Though that first session back in 1997 only produced six songs, the next two recording sessions, which occurred in 2005, were more efficient.

"We worked at a much faster pace," Clifford explains. "Bruce had been giving it a lot of thought, obviously, over the prior eight or nine years. He still didn't have a more organized framework for the songs, though; he still came to the sessions with basically the raw material. It was him, his guitar, and some lyrics on a sheet, and we would start a tune and sometimes go through three or four key changes to find a place where he'd want to do it. We'd even get down to the point where we'd lay down a partial track in the key of D and then stop and shift everything to the key of E or something along those lines, until Bruce found his voice and a comfortable spot. And then we'd go ahead and do it," he says matter-of-factly.

Most songs were completed in only two takes.

"It was very fast," he explains of the recording process. "There was some stopping and starting to define certain elements of the arrangements, but for the most part, it was 'Kick it off and play it,' and that was it. The DVD that comes with the record is really representative of what it was like. You see the horn players out in the hallway, you see everybody freewheeling in the living room; the atmosphere was really captured well on the DVD."

When recording was complete and it came time to hit the road, though, things suddenly became very complicated for Clifford.

"When we went into rehearsals, everything was moving ahead really well," he remembers, "and then I started literally losing sleep because of my business. The Seeger Sessions tour was leaving for May and June, and those are my two biggest moneymaking months of the year for this business I started ten years ago."

Major job offers were coming in to Clifford from important events like Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* tour, and it soon became clear that Skylands wouldn't be able to survive a summer off.

"I remember staying in a hotel down near Asbury Park and literally staying awake all night wondering what I was going to do," recounts Clifford. "When I left the last rehearsal session, I knew I was going to be having a conversation with George Travis [Springsteen's tour director] about being able to continue with the tour, and I knew it wasn't going to happen. In reality, my life is not set up to allow me to go on an extended tour as a musician. That's not what I do, that's not who I am," Clifford explains, without a hint of regret.

Though he takes his work at Skylands very seriously, an even more important role to Clifford is his position at home as a devoted father and husband. Life on the road wasn't something he felt he could take on, leaving behind a dependent family for a rather long period of time.

"I'm a very hands-on dad," says the father of two, "and my wife has a career. For her to maintain a career without me around, it would have been ridiculous."

In the end, banjo player Greg Liszt of Crooked Still took over touring duties with the band, but when Springsteen returned to New Jersey at the end of the U.S. tour, he invited Clifford to perform with him for a night at the PNC Banks Arts Center.

"It was fabulous," Clifford says of the live performance with Springsteen. "The PNC Arts Center felt smaller than I thought it would. I've played on a lot of stages, and I've actually played in front of large audiences a lot in my life—not on a Springsteen scale, obviously—but it doesn't matter if you're playing in front of 200 people or 20,000, they're all listening to you. I've been a lot more nervous in small situations than I was that night," he laughs. "I felt really relaxed, I felt real good."

"IN REALITY, MY LIFE IS NOT SET UP TO ALLOW ME TO GO ON AN EXTENDED TOUR AS A MUSICIAN. THAT'S NOT WHAT I DO, THAT'S NOT WHO I AM."

As the Seeger Sessions Band returned to Europe for another leg of touring, it was life as usual at home in rural northwestern New Jersey for Clifford. He and his team at Skylands Pro Audio were busy getting ready for the prestigious and acoustically complicated Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival coming up in a few weeks, with plans well underway for the 18-stage event.

He sits at his desk in his office, talking excitedly on the phone with a friend about their tickets for an upcoming concert by banjo phenomenon Béla Fleck. On a bulletin board above the desk, there are pictures of his family along with some older photos of himself performing in the area. Around the walls you can see framed, autographed posters from a series of concerts he hosted a few years back at Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ with his non-profit group, the Skylands Music & Arts Alliance. There's usually a banjo somewhere in his office, too. It's nicer than that rented Japanese one he incessantly practiced right-hand rolls on, the one somebody told him he'd never learn how to play.

HOLD ON TIGHT!: Bruce may have called this an "experiment," but it certainly seems to be working. I saw the *Rising* tour in Buffalo, but the energy, passion and musical gambles in the house in Saratoga put even the E Street Band to shame. "My Oklahoma Home" gives a good insight into what this band and tour are all about. The dust-bowl anthem from the 1930s started out as pure folk, with just Bruce's voice and an acoustic guitar. Then the fiddles and pedal steel guitar came in, creating a western swing mood. Finally, the horn section checked in, bringing New Orleans-style jazz and a much quickened tempo. That's what the Seeger Sessions Band is: a 17-piece collection of fiddles, horns, accordion, pedal steel, piano, banjo, gospel harmonies, all barreling down the road, and everyone wondering where they're going. But everyone is so busy singing along and dancing that we just hold on for the ride. —*Phil Prehn*

JUNE 20
TWEETER WATERFRONT AMPHITHEATRE
CAMDEN, NJ

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Maria's Bed/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Long Black Veil/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Rag Mama Rag/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/Ramrod/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: Bruce finishes the U.S. leg with a handful of sold-out shows in his traditional East Coast stomping grounds. Camden, NJ, just across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, is a sold-out show featuring the full-band live premiere of "Maria's Bed." Both Southside Johnny ("The Ghost of New Jersey!") and Joe Grushecky ("The Ghost of Pittsburgh!") guest on harp and guitar, respectively, on "Pay Me My Money Down."

"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "My City of Ruins"

ANOTHER EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: Having traveled from Europe, I immediately noticed some Euro/American differences: People brought along kids of all ages. In Europe we drink, make noise, and go berserk, too—we just don't bring out the whole family.

His stories between songs are longer over here and different, too. In Paris, he was Bush-bashing. Over here, he takes a different approach; "Let the music speak for itself," he said at one point.

And the crowd is great: everybody's on his/her feet, singing, clapping, really into it. Not that we have much of a choice—Bruce takes advantage of local regional loyalties and announces a "New Jersey rumble," making the Philadelphians sing "Old Dan Tucker," and then has the New Jersey crowd do the same, finding out which is the loudest crowd.

When, during "Pay Me My Money Down," Joe Grushecky and Southside Johnny show up on stage, I wonder if Bruce had been drinking a few beers with his buddies before the show. That would certainly explain why he starts a song in the wrong key—Marc Anthony taps him on the shoulder to warn him, and Bruce thanks him for it. "Starting a song in the wrong key is bad," Bruce says, "but if you continue, you'll end up in real fucking trouble!"

—*Peter Vandenberghe*

JUNE 22
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
NEW YORK, NY

SETLIST: American Land/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Johnny 99/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

NOTES: The Garden show boasts a six-man horn section, and with Patti Scialfa back on stage as well, the Seeger Sessions Band is at full strength. "This is an immigrant song for New York City," he announces before the new, original opening number, an Irish reel called "American Land." During "Old Dan Tucker" Bruce holds an audience sing-off between the New York and New Jersey crowds. In the encore, "Bring 'Em Home" is dedicated to Steve Earle and stripped down to Springsteen alone on harmonica and guitar.

IN THE CROWD: Pat Riley and his wife, Steve Van Zandt and wife Maureen, Adele Springsteen and Bruce's aunts, John McEnroe, Tim Robbins, Tim Russert, Rita Wilson, Eliot Spitzer, Max Weinberg, Jimmy Fallon, Jesse Malin, Bob Benjamin, Bill Murray, Dave Marsh, Jon Bon Jovi, Jon Landau, and Bill Flanagan.

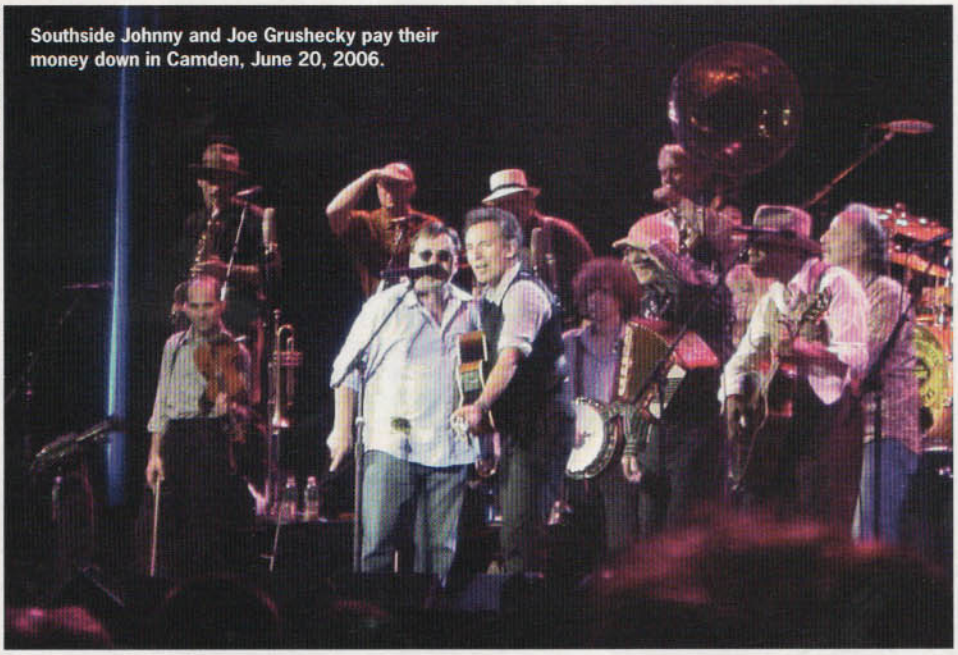
"18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "Johnny 99"

MADISON SQUARE DANCE: I was curious to see how the very urban, very large confines of New York City and Madison Square Garden would welcome Bruce's *Seeger Sessions* project. This is the land where the mere mention of NASCAR draws smirks, and the only time you really hear country music is when the CMAs are in town.

Despite Bruce and the band coming out firing on all cylinders, the "bloodthirsty New Yorkers" (as Bruce called them) seemed content to keep their New York asses glued to their seats. That is, until "Jacob's Ladder." Perhaps it was Bruce's coaxing to stand up and groove—he even went over to the far end of the stage to make sure his mom and aunts were up and dancing (and they were, all night!)—or maybe just the infectious nature of the song, but at the conclusion of that tune I turned to see the whole arena standing up, singing, and dancing, and I said to myself, "He's won 'em over now."

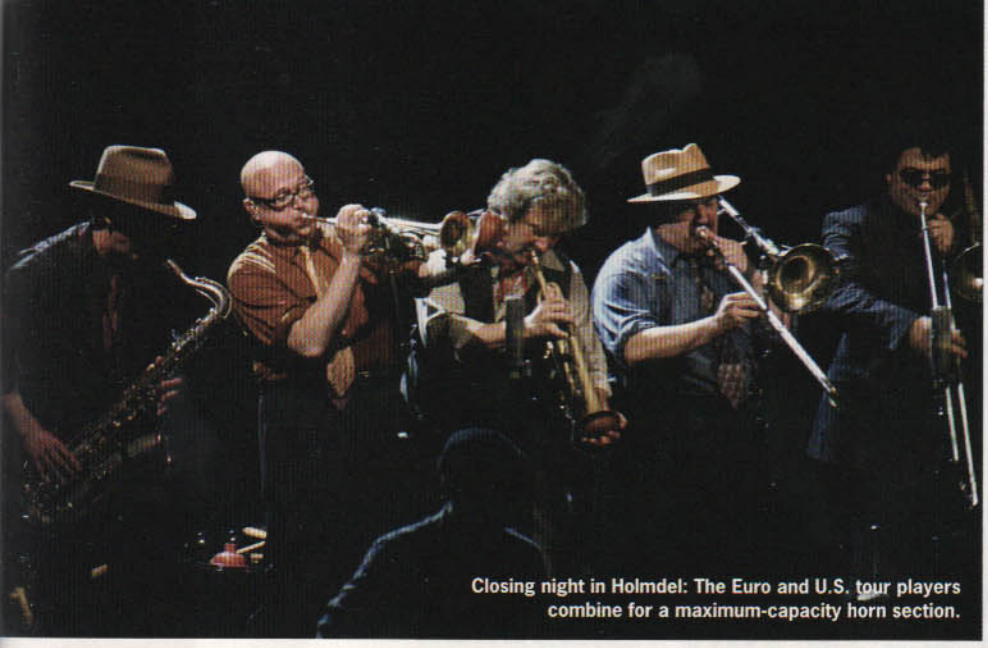
We were graced with a six-piece horn section, and the wall of sound created by all 19 performers that plows its way from the stage is amazing, especially when the horns kick in. Sadly, you don't get this same feeling from the bootlegs—this is one tour which really has to be experienced live to understand how wonderful the shows are. Also, having a bit better seats than I did back in Asbury, I got a better sense of how active Bruce is during this show and what a physical toll it takes on the guy.

Highlights included the premiere of the new "American Land" to open in grand Celtic style, "Poor Man," an unbelievable "Open All Night," and a "Pay Me My Money Down" which ended with a tender moment. Tuba player extraordinaire Art Baron—the last band member on stage at the song's end as usual, who is usually dragged off by the Boss—was instead surprised to find his mom tapping him on the shoulder and leading him off while a beaming Bruce delightedly took the whole thing in, standing back behind the piano. —*John Schlicher*



MIKE BEDER PHOTO

Southside Johnny and Joe Grushecky pay their money down in Camden, June 20, 2006.



Closing night in Holmdel: The Euro and U.S. tour players combine for a maximum-capacity horn section.

MARK R. SULLIVAN PHOTO

JUNE 23
NBC STUDIOS
NEW YORK, NY

SETLIST: Bring 'Em Home/Pay Me My Money Down

NOTES: Bruce and the Band tape a guest performance on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien:* "on a mission to spread love and joy in the late night hours.... I want you to grab your wifey in the nightie, grab your man or your woman out there, and let's spread the love!"

JUNE 24 - 25
PNC BANK ARTS CENTER
HOLMDEL, NJ

6/24 SETLIST: American Land/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Atlantic City/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home (with Mark Clifford)/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Maria's Bed/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In

6/24 NOTES: "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" plays over the P.A. before the start of this sold-out show, on yet another night when Bruce magically stopped the rain—with the first song, even. "Maria's Bed" is played by request. "Bring 'Em Home" is again played solo, on acoustic and harmonica. But otherwise it's a packed stage, with Patti back, Mark Clifford guesting on "My Oklahoma Home," and all six horn players all night.

6/24 "18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "When the Saints Go Marching In"

UNMISTAKABLY SPRINGSTEEN: The show's opening song, "American Land," is a Pogues-like Celtic rocker, kick-starting the proceedings with its new and brash sound. "When the Saints Go Marching In" was one of the spotlight opportunities for Marc Anthony Thompson to share the mic with Bruce (another was the fantastic, jazzy highlight, "Eyes on the Prize"). It took a little time to sync up, but there is no denying the chemistry these two have formed over the course of this tour. So, another great show—and if you missed this tour, you missed a *great* time, and an enthused Bruce you fully recognize, along with a sound you can't help but stomp your feet to and sing out with. It's not rock, but it is the roots thereof, and the sound is different but unmistakably Springsteen.—*Bill Kenney*

6/25 SETLIST: American Land/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/Long Black Veil/Jesse James/Long Time Comin'/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/Devils & Dust/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Ramrod/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/The Man on the Flying Trapeze

6/25 SOUNDCHECK: After the soundcheck, but before most attendees have taken their seats, Bruce is spotted taking some young guests around the stage, showing off the various instruments.

6/25 NOTES: Another sold-out homecoming show, and the last of this 18-night U.S. tour. Springsteen confirms to the crowd, "This is our last date here in the States." As at the *Devils & Dust* tour-ender, Bruce has his family in the house. While setlist variation on this tour has been minimal, this second of two back-to-back shows in the same venue has Bruce making sure to shake things up for repeat attendees. "My City of Ruins" appears to be an audible in the first encore slot, with Bruce starting alone but the band quickly coming out to join in. The biggest surprise is the closing number, played only once prior at the last Asbury rehearsal show: "The Man on the Flying Trapeze." As Bruce remarks, it's a "song that explains what we're trying to do. Not what we're *trying* to do—what we're *doing*."

6/25 "18 NIGHTS OF BRUCE": "The Man on the Flying Trapeze"

A MUSE REKINDLED: The *Seeger Sessions* project is something that has permitted Springsteen to expand his sonic palette in ways that are completely amazing. Opening with "American Land," this juggernaut of a band lurched into a rough-and-tumble Irish punk jig, sounding as unlike the E Street Band as you could imagine. The group came on more like the Irish punk-weirdoes The Pogues, with echoes of barroom fights in Blarney and sea chanteys sung by men with lagers in hand. As the evening went on, they continued to expand their range to include Dixieland jazz, norteño Tex-Mex south-of-the-border Hispanicisms, Texas-styled western swing, and plaintive gospel colorations, all filtered through a massive propulsion of big band sound that brought together Johnny Cash, Louis Armstrong, The Chieftains, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Glenn Miller and Bob Wills into some sort of electric hootenanny.

The first song of the encore, a chilling version of "My City of Ruins," recontextualized that song to reflect the changes in American society since the days after 9/11 when the country was united. Bruce Springsteen has not only rekindled his own muse and its passionate articulation of American Humanism, but he has provided for us a way to see ourselves in a time of corroded culture through the prism of the past. He points to the ways in which the past can teach us how to better understand who we are today, and how to see through the transparently corrupt and venal modes of behavior, uncaring and selfish, that permeate contemporary society.

When he closed off this epic show, nearly three hours in length, he amazed the audience by audaciously and sincerely performing "The Man on the Flying Trapeze," which he marked as a model for his efforts: Springsteen as that man on the trapeze, up there on the high wire singing "When the Saints Go Marching In" and transporting his audience to a different time and a different place in order to better understand their own time and their own place.

—*David Shasha*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THE SEEGER SESSIONS TOUR PLAYERS

CURTIS KING, LISA LOWELL & CINDY MIZELLE VOCALS

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

Interviews with Bruce Springsteen's touring band conducted in mid-June 2006 by Christopher Phillips

From back when this whole thing was just in the rehearsal phase, so many fans have known your names and want to know more about you, so let's talk about your background—what you've done and how you came to be in the band. Lisa, obviously you've been singing with Bruce for quite a long time—I guess the first time I saw you live with Bruce was the Asbury Park holiday shows. When did you start?

Lisa Lowell: I'd say officially about 15 years ago, during the *Lucky Town / Human Touch* records. I sang with Patti [Scialfa] and Soozie [Tyrell].

And you'd been singing with those two for much longer than that.

Lisa: Yeah, I was a member of the Asbury Jukes, with Patti and Soozie, in the '80s. I'm from down the Jersey Shore, I'm a Long Branch girl originally. But I had moved to New York City, and I was singing in the streets with Patti and Soozie. Then we were contracted by Southside Johnny to come sing on his record, and they took us on the road. So that's really the beginning of my working with people from that area, from Monmouth County. And I did some videos with Bruce, after the *Lucky Town* album.

Curtis, I was looking at your credits—it's an incredibly long list.

Curtis King: I've been moving around a little bit, yeah!

One of the first things that I found, chronologically, was the Madonna record—was that the first big gig for you?

Curtis: In terms of huge, yeah. I think it was '83 or '84 that I did that. That was *Like a Virgin*. And then came Duran Duran, and touring with them a lot. In between, there were records with David Bowie... and down the line, Southside Johnny as well.

That's right, on *Slow Dance*. I was going to ask, was there any crossover between you and Lisa through that?

Curtis: No, but Cindy and I did that record together. We got hired—I think it was through Nile, Nile Rodgers producing that. Or Billy Rush, Southside's guitar player; it might have been Billy who pulled us in. But I've been bouncing around quite a few situations for quite a while.

Part of what's interesting about this tour is, you've got all these different groups of people who have worked together, these different circles. And you and Cindy are another circle—you've done some Freddie Jackson records....

Curtis: Yeah, Freddie Jackson—we go back! *[Laughs]* Cindy and I do go back quite a ways. And actually, my call on this record was through Steve Jordan, a good friend of mine as well as of Patti's and Bruce's. He called and asked if I wanted to go audition for the gig, I said sure—and thank God it hit me, he called asking about sopranos, and I thought of Cindy right off the top of my head.

Cindy Mizelle: Thank God! *[Laughs]*

Lisa: Thank God he thought of Cindy!

Well Cindy, you've had a lot of touring under your belt, it seems like—Dave Matthews Band, was that a big one?

Cindy: Yes. The Rolling Stones and Luther Vandross, too.

"Further On (Up the Road)" last night [its premiere in Chicago] was just amazing. It was great to hear you get to step out—I just thought you sounded beautiful.

Cindy: Thank you—it was a big surprise! Because I didn't know we were going to do it...

That's the impression I had—sounds like it was worked out at soundcheck, but maybe not ready for the show, and then he pulled it out anyway?

Cindy: Yes, exactly. *[Everyone nods]*

Lisa: I love how he trusts us like that.

And you feel that?

Lisa: Yeah, I do. He has the musicians he feels like he can throw things at, and we'll be there for him.

And that's one of the real hallmarks of this tour—there seems to be so much spontaneity.

Curtis: Last night was spontaneity. Because he basically pulled everything out of the hat—away from the list. Which really, for us, is a nice challenge: Oh, it's this song now, not that one... you know, we're coming down for one song, uh-oh, we have to turn around and go back to our riser because it's not that song now.... It just makes it a lot of fun for us.

Lisa: Yeah, it keeps us riveted—you can't get sleepy up there!

Curtis: You have to focus on him at all times....

Cindy: You watch him at all times—you watch his shoulders...

Curtis: ...because he will switch up on you, and the next thing you know, he's done something else.

Cindy: ...you have to keep your eye on *everything*, to come in for a part, you watch his guitar, all of that.

Even from the crowd, the physicality of his cues is pretty wild to watch.

Lisa: And he does it to the horns, too: he just *[snaps fingers]* creates a new part on the spot.

Curtis: He just sings something out to them, and *bam*, they grab it. They're that good.

Lisa: He spontaneously rearranges.

That's been interesting too, because as the tour goes along, I've kind of expected things—I mean, certainly Bruce likes to shake up the show, but I expected things within the songs to become a little more rigid, a bit more locked in as you played show after show. And it seems like that really hasn't happened.

Lisa: No, the opposite.

Cindy: He's very good like that. He knows how to be a true *bandleader*, and how to keep the heart within everyone, to keep the excitement happening by adding new things, changing things up.

How does he compare with other bandleaders you've worked with?

Cindy: He's unique—there's no one that I know of like him. Nobody.

Curtis: Right. There's no one I know who works like he does. My only real huge tour was Duran Duran—I did them off-and-on for ten years—and y'know, our bandleader was Simon [Le Bon]. And... *[laughs]* he just didn't have it on the cues. I really just had to almost rely on myself, to know what he was trying to convey to me onstage. But Bruce is very clear.

Cindy: Every step of the way, Bruce is clear on what he wants—from everyone.

Lisa: My feeling is that we're a more informal band; E Street is much more structured and formal. We're like the world's biggest bar band. That's what I think. *[All laugh]*

And it is big! There's so much going on. Have any of you worked with a band this big before?

Cindy: Not at all. Never have.

Curtis: I've never been on stage with this many guys.

Cindy: And it's beautiful. I mean, everyone—Bruce is so great, so the trickle-down into the organization is wonderful. Everybody gets down and does their work and gets the band all together on time, you know, on the bus, and luggage.... And also, on stage, he directs things where he's like, "Okay, come on over here...." Some other things may happen during the show where you end up somewhere else. But there is a method that he uses to keep us "safe."

"Further On (Up the Road)" is such a complete rearrangement from what he's done before and what's on the record. How does that come about—is that a collaborative process? Or does Bruce just come to you and say, this is what I'm envisioning, this is what I want you to do?

Lisa: He throws down.

Curtis: He comes in with it, and here it is. It just shifts, like you said, from what it used to be, to this new arrangement—like a baby, like a new baby he's birthed.

Lisa: But for him, I feel like there's some spontaneity in how he composes with us.

Curtis: Oh, yeah.

Lisa: He comes in with an idea, but then he just goes... I feel like sometimes he's just pulling it out of the air, right there, you know? And he's looking around him and figuring out what's there.

Cindy: And it's great that he can do this like that, you know—to remain that open to new things, to take whatever he had, the way it was, and make it totally different.

To be able to do that 35 years into a career is quite a talent.

Curtis: And what's interesting is the crowd—of course, they don't know what's coming, and you see, it's just like, *"Wow!* Yeah yeah yeah!" They know the song...

Lisa: But he's making it new for them.

Curtis: They hear it's a different arrangement, but then there are those words they know, but a new melody...

Cindy: And he's still excited about music. Totally! That's a great thing to have, being in the business so long.

Curtis: It keeps us inspired, at all times. At all times. And we've been in the business a while—he still keeps us inspired.

Lisa: We've been there, but we haven't done *that!*

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

THE RHYTHM SECTION

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

JEREMY CHATZKY
BASS

So—your mother says hello.

That's right, she photographed your wedding?

She did—five years ago now. It's funny, she told me at the time that you were a musician, and then right before this tour started, she got back in touch: "So I guess you know my son's on the road with Bruce!" I said, "What?!"

Yeah, I think she talks that up a good amount *[laughs]*. And she actually now knows how to get online, she's looking at Backstreets.com, so she's always one step ahead of me.

That's right, she said she was following the tour on our site.

Which I can't believe, because like a year ago she couldn't send an email. Now she's all over it—that's funny.

It sounds like she was a big folkie, really into the folk scene back in the day.

Well, she was—and my dad also played bluegrass music a lot. They've been divorced for a long time, but he was always playing in these bluegrass bands and was a very good musician himself. They were always pretty into the folk scene.

How did you get started playing? Did it come down from your dad?

Yes and no—I mean, yeah, he showed me at first, and I'd play along with him, but I was probably listening to more rock stuff on my own. So I kind of taught myself. But it was also the way I sort of got started, doing some of this kind of folkier stuff. It's down in the brain there somewhere.

So how long have you been doing the Gotham Playboys?

Well, if you *really* go back: Sam [Bardfeld], the fiddle player, and myself have been playing together since college. We went to college together at Wesleyan. We played in bands there that were pretty Cajun-inspired, also with a friend of ours named Will [Holshouser], who plays accordion. We all moved to New York after school, where we formed the Gotham Playboys. That was Sam, myself, and Will, and then we hooked up with Larry Eagle, the drummer.

How did you meet Larry?

Jeez, I can't quite remember! I mean, we were all also playing with other people, and we sort of just got involved in some bands playing country and folk and that kind of music in New York. We met Larry somehow or another through that. And then he started playing with us, with the Gotham Playboys, and we would sometimes work with Soozie, who we crossed paths with somehow or another.

You don't remember how that happened?

Sam has a better memory for this than I do, but I think what happened is that some of us also played in a band called The Pinballs. Which was actually put together by—this is pretty strange—a guy who was the food critic for *The New York Times*, and he satrted a band *[laughs]*. And we would play all these food events—zydeco music, New Orleans music goes really well with those foodie events. So he hired some of us, and I think that's how Sam, Will, and I were involved with him, and then maybe he already knew Soozie and Larry, and I think that actually might be the genesis. As Bruce says, if the fact and the myth collide, print the myth *[laughs]*. Something along those lines!

So at some point Soozie called us, because Bruce had asked her to recommend someone to play at a birthday party for him. This is probably ten years ago or so. And it was like, the party was like on Saturday, and she calls us on Friday night. So yeah, we'll come down and play... and of course with Bruce, it turned into a long jam session.

He came up on stage?

Yeah—I think it started outside, and then it rained, so we all moved into the barn, and it was like a three- or four-hour-long jam session, which was just a total blast, obviously. And then it wasn't much later when he called some of us up because he was recording for the *[Where Have All the Flowers Gone* Pete Seeger tribute]. He was going to do the one song for the compilation, which ended up being "We Shall Overcome." But he called up a bunch of us—plus the horn players, and a banjo player—and we ended up spending a day recording stuff. Which was great.

So at the time, you probably knew half of those players at that session?

Yeah—at least half. I knew Charlie [Giordano] and Soozie and Larry really well—and Sam, obviously. I'm sure I'd crossed paths with those horn players—I didn't know them well, but I'd probably done something or another with them. Will, who usually plays accordion with us, was actually out of the country when it happened, so that's why Charlie came in instead. We'd worked with Charlie a good bit, too, so we knew Charlie really well.

But man, poor Will.

I know!

LARRY EAGLE
PERCUSSION

I was just talking with Jeremy about the Gotham Playboys—it seems like that's really the roots of this band.

It certainly is. Jeremy probably told you that he and Sam and an accordion player named Will formed a band when they were in college, and when they all moved to New York sort of independently, the band sort of picked up again. I joined the band first, and then we've also had Charlie as part of the band a good deal of the time, and Soozie a part of the band when she wasn't working with "our friend." So Soozie—the Amazing Soozie Tyrell—is the conduit through which the Gotham Playboys know Bruce.

A lot of the fun of this whole thing, to me, has been the spontaneity of it all. It seems like things really are happening on the fly, very spontaneously. Is that true? Or is that just a nice illusion?

No, no, it's not an illusion at all—you came to the show last night [in Chicago], and you saw a first, a world first—something that during rehearsal we thought was still a work in progress, and then Bruce said, "Oh, let's do it!" And so you can't fake that—that was spontaneity! Every night he will find a way to keep us on our toes. There's always something that happens every night, and very often more than once, where the arrangement changes.

One of his most amazing skills, as you've seen as somebody attending the shows, is the way he conducts an audience. Well, he conducts the band the same way: he can get us to do things that we didn't know we could do. He takes us down roads that by all rights you shouldn't expect you should be driving down. But he just gets up in the front of the truck and beeps the horn and drives us down, and we're all happy to be there.

Are there scary moments?

Scary is not the word. I would say *exhilarating* is probably a better word than *scary*. It's exciting, and yeah, there are moments where we're thinking, *Okay, do I remember this?* Or, *Is that what he means? Is that what he means us to do?* And he's so good at communicating those spur-of-the-moment interests and desires that yeah, we're pretty comfortable going there.

How was New Orleans?

New Orleans was *amazing*. Obviously, after everything that happened after Katrina, we knew it was going to be emotional; we knew it was going to be a watershed for us, the band. We didn't realize it was going to be as emotional for so much of the audience—that was the thing. The moment that really struck me was during "My City of Ruins," the moment when Bruce sort of raises his hand a fraction of an inch, and then you see hands going up—"with these hands"—and you see a sea of hands, of 70,000 pairs of hands, from the front of the crowd to the back of the crowd, just going up as if it's a tidal wave.

And these are people who are not used to that ritual.

That's an important point—these were not the die-hard aficionados, these were people who were there for Jazz Fest. And they all reacted spontaneously, emotionally, *cathartically* to that moment, and it was very exciting. And very moving.

Well, that's quite an opening night.

Oh yes, absolutely.

As for the rest of the tour, what have you felt from the stage in terms of crowd response? It seems to me like everyone has been really into it.

What's fascinating to me is that the responses have been uniformly spectacular. I mean, every place we've been. I think the first non-English-speaking audience we played for was in Paris, and I was a little concerned—I was thinking these people probably don't have any background in a lot of traditional American folk, and it's word-based music, a lot of it. How are they going to react? And they knew all the words to all the songs, before we could even start them!

It sounds like the European audiences were amazing.

The response here has also been something. What's notable to me as far as the response in this country, is the way the Bruce fans react when they recognize one of the songs that we've completely recontextualized. So, for example, "Johnny 99" is unrecognizable until the first words come out of Bruce's mouth. And they hear it, and they're like, "This sounds exciting, this sounds interesting, what's this gonna be..." and then of course when he sings the first words: *"Ohhh!* It's Johnny 99!" So that's one of the most amazing things—there, too, but certainly here: seeing how people react when they recognize a song that is, by all rights, completely unrecognizable.

Right. It's interesting how this tour has divided fans into different camps. Some feel like, "This is one of the greatest things Bruce has ever done, you're crazy if you don't go see this band," and there are others just waiting for the next E Street Band tour. You want to tell them that they're missing something incredible in the meantime. Have you guys felt anything along those lines?

What we've detected, certainly, is that if anybody came to the show with mixed emotions, they didn't leave that way. We would have no way of knowing beforehand... but what we've noticed simply is that anybody who comes to the show gets something out of it and feels like they've gotten their money's worth.

And that seems to be true across the board—I can't tell you how many people I've talked to who said, "I wasn't interested in this tour, I really wanted nothing to do with this record. And then you encouraged me to go and see it, and I went and saw it and *ohmygod it's the greatest thing.*"

What I've heard from people and read in some places is that some people say, "Hmmm, I don't know, maybe I'll see one show." And then of course they come, and it's like, "I want to see *every* show!" And that's been very gratifying.

The music itself—I would assume that, through what you were doing in New York with Jeremy and Sam, this was kind of your world. Stylistically, the Cajun and the zydeco. But in terms of Pete Seeger's music, what was your experience?

Well, I'm a little older than Sam and Jeremy; I grew up with a lot of the material that we're doing, and I grew up listening to Pete Seeger and a number of the people who are notable as '50s and '60s folkies. That was certainly part of the cultural fabric of my early life. So that part was not novel. And playing different acoustic and different regional styles of American music is something that I do with them and have done with many other people as well. So that part of it wasn't that much of a challenge, or not a *challenge* at all. But part of what's exciting about it is what Bruce is calling upon: everybody in the band has a different set of experiences, and many of them have a lot of experience with music anywhere from Southwest Louisiana, like the Cajun music, or New Orleans Dixieland and post-World War II New Orleans music, swamp music to some degree, the folk tradition... I mean, we're all calling upon all of our resources.

And all of those resources seem to come together for a sound that's unique, at least to me. Is that an accurate perception?

It's absolutely unique. It's a very accurate perception, because Bruce did things that I wouldn't have imagined. I've played Dixieland music, I've played folk music, I've played Cajun music... I've rarely played them at the same time *[laughs]*. In the same song!

These are things I never thought would mesh.

Absolutely, and that's the way we look at it too. Bruce had the concept, he's described it as a "happy accident"—I think perhaps the best word for it is, it's a *gumbo*.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

CHARLES GIORDANO

B3 ORGAN, ACCORDION, PIANO

It's been fun to trace how everyone knows each other—you and Soozie have been playing together for a long time, right?

Yes, I worked with Soozie in the Buster Poindexter band—we were nine years together in that band—and she and I also did many, many duo gigs together in New York. So we've played together a lot and are good friends.

I know you've had a ton of experience; can you fill me in a bit more on your background?

Sure, I'll give you a little review. I'm a New York musician, was with Genya Ravan in the late '70s, and David Johansen—I played on a bunch of recordings and toured with him. And then we were opening for Pat Benatar, and I got the gig with her. I was with her from '81 to '90, for all of the records and tours in there. And then I toured with Joe Cocker, and Hall & Oates.

After that I didn't want to go on the road as much, so I did a lot of studio stuff in New York. Recorded with Cyndi Lauper and Rosanne Cash, and did some Broadway—I did *Victor/Victoria* on Broadway for two years. All kinds of different gigs. With the accordion as well as the keyboards, that gets you in some different directions in the music world.

And then there are the Gotham Playboys.

Yes—I wasn't a regular member, but I was a sub, and I played with them quite a bit. Sam, Jeremy, and Larry are actual members; Soozie and I play with them a fair amount, but we're not regular members. So what happened in my story is, the regular member was in Japan when Bruce wanted to record the first session for the Pete Seeger tribute record. And since I had played with them a lot, Larry called me to do the session. We recorded about six or seven songs that day, and Bruce picked "We Shall Overcome" as the one that he wanted to be on that record.

So many years went by before Bruce brought everyone back together—had you sort of forgotten about that project in the intervening years?

I wouldn't say I forgot about it—it was etched in my mind, because it was a wonderful day.

Did you have any sense that something more might come of it?

To me, I thought *maybe*. But I didn't want to have too many expectations, so I was just happy about it, and I figured... see what happens, you know? I was hoping, but you know how that is, you don't want to have high expectations and then be disappointed. But then we did a second session, we did a third one... and *then* I was thinking, gee, maybe this will be something! And it turned out to be. So it's been just super.

Prior to the first session, where was Springsteen on your radar? Were you a fan?

I was definitely a fan. I saw him twice at the Bottom Line—I saw him there after the second record [in 1974], with the older band...

So, with Sancious and Boom Carter?

That's right. I saw that, and then I saw the *Born to Run* show at the Bottom Line, I was there for that too. And then I saw him in the '80s—I've seen many Bruce shows, and I was a fan, and I *am* a fan. It was nice to meet Roy in L.A., and we met Nils as well.

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

Roy give you any shit?

[Laughs] No! Very nice guy. He sat in with us at the Greek Theatre, it was great.

I'm curious about what kind of music you listen to, your favorite artists and inspirations.

You know, that changes every day. There are so many, because I play the keyboards, I play the piano, the accordion, so I have all this music that I love to listen to. Lately I've been listening to a lot of country music—I've been listening to Spade Cooley and things like that, western swing where they use the accordion.

You've worked with a lot of people, how would you compare him as a bandleader to others you've worked with? Hey, compare Bruce and Pat Benatar!

Well, it's not really fair to talk about specific other people—Pat Benatar was great, too—but Bruce is a *really good* bandleader. He's very clear, and very musical in his direction. And it makes it fun for us—well, I'll speak for myself, it makes it fun for *me*, as a player. We start the first song, and we're on a roller coaster ride. Because he's going to change things, he's going to lengthen things, he's going to shorten things, the endings might be a little different. But he's very clear, using his body and his eyes and the guitar to show 18 people where he wants to go, and it makes it a lot of fun. Even last night [in Chicago], we got four songs in, and out came a song that we had tried in soundcheck. And then the whole setlist, everything sort of changed after that.

Yeah, it seemed like there were so many audibles, left and right. And then you had a spontaneous moment, when Bruce led you over to the far wing of the stage...

Oh, man!

And beyond, it looked like! Crossing some sort of canyon there...

Yes, yes! I know! That was a little nerve-wracking, but I got over it *[laughs]*. That was fun. So there, you see what I mean about the roller coaster.

DUNLOP USA

THE FIDDLE PLAYERS

GUY ACETO PHOTO

SAM BARDFELD
VIOLIN

Let's talk a bit about your career up to this point. It seems like one of the watchwords of this whole endeavor is "eclectic," and you yourself have done quite a bit of different stuff.

Yeah, I have. These days I do mostly jazz, a bunch of different varieties. The main gig I have is a group called the Jazz Passengers, which does a lot of work with Debbie Harry, and sometimes Elvis Costello—kind of a downtown jazz group. The leader of that band [Roy Nathanson] also has a solo project that I tour with. And then I have my own quintet—I just came out with my second record, which is called *Periodic Trespasses*. I've also done a bunch of Afro-Cuban and Latin Jazz stuff. I still play with the Gotham Playboys, though we don't work as much as we used to.

So how much of a connective thread is there to what you're doing now?

This is a great project for me, on so many levels. I get to be myself—my approach to the material is sort of that of Stuff Smith, 1920s and '30s, African-American jazz violin tradition. Which is connected to the sort of Kansas City territory band thing, which is where the horns are coming from... so, to me it's not that far apart. Some people have asked me, how does this relate to what you normally do, it seems so different? And to me, it doesn't seem different at all. I'm not playing Eric Dolphy licks on Bruce's gig *[laughs]*. But I do get to be myself—and a character, which is part of myself.

So much of this project, to me, is about characters. And there are so many strong characters on stage. We're working with these sort of canonical American songs, classic American songs of the last almost 200 years. They're stories, and Bruce is telling these stories, and within them, everybody gets a chance to tell their own, which kind of fits in with the bigger story. It's incredible, for me, to watch Bruce and see how much freedom he gives everybody to be themselves, and to watch an extraordinary variety of talent. But more than that, just the characters—the individual characters within that story.

How would you describe yours?

Well, I'm not sure I'm the best person to put words to it! I'm sort of *doing* it, I don't get to watch it... I don't know, sort of a jazz hipster kind of a thing. I move around a lot, and I'm a litttle bit nutty.... But it's sort of a personal thing, I don't know if I'd want to put words to it. I guess it's a bit liminal, that side of things.

As you say, you're doing it.

All music—rock, jazz, any good music—is about characters and about storytelling. I consider myself to be in many ways a jazz musician, but I can't listen to 90 percent of current jazz. Because it stopped telling stories. It used to be that every good jazz musician—like in rock, the great rock musicians are songwriters—had a voice, that you could tell them instantaneously, that their solos all told stories. And now, jazz has become so institutionalized, everybody goes to school, and in many ways that kind of music has lost its ability to tell stories. And so genre itself doesn't matter to me so much; I'm interested in music that tells stories. And that's one of the reasons this music is so exciting.

I was reading about *Periodic Trespasses*, and the storytelling aspect of that really jumped out and made me think, yeah, for that reason alone you're a great pick to be on stage with Springsteen. Were you a fan before this project? Is he someone whose music meant something to you?

Well, not before 1997, when we did that [first session]. I mean, I grew up in New York, born in 1968, so obviously I heard all the classic hits on rock radio and all that stuff, but I didn't grow up being a "fan," so to speak. I vividly remember that first recording session in Bruce's barn, playing those tunes, and just standing five or six feet away from him. And the way that he *interpreted* these songs, it gave me chills. It felt like I was playing with Dylan in 1963 or something. He just *completely* blew me away in that session. And so I became a convert after that.

How did he convey what he was looking for, or how in-depth did he go in terms of his interpretation of the songs before you attempted them?

Well you know, the DVD that Thom Zimny made is great, because what you see is what happened. Bruce would play the song for us once, he might have a couple of words to say about it—literally a couple of words—and then we'd start recording! And if he wanted you to solo, he'd look at you. Really, he'd play the song once for us, enough for us to basically know the structure, jot a couple things down about form if there was something weird, and maybe he'd have a couple of words to say about it, and then we'd start recording. And you can hear him on the record, calling people's names out.

At the beginning of "O Mary" you can see exactly the instructions he gave us: "Well, maybe the violins could try... something..." and he made a little gesture with his hand. At that point, I kind of heard the beginning of the song, and really the only thing I thought about at that point was Tom Waits. Not to say anything about what Dave Marsh thinks about my playing on that song, but all that I was thinking about when I heard the opening of that song was Tom Waits. And so, that's what happened on the session.

With the Gotham Playboys, how long have you and Soozie been playing violin together?

I would say since about 1993—a long time. I love playing with Soozie, and we have a great relationship because we're so different, but we also really know how to blend, to give each other space, and all of that. It's always a treat to play with Soozie.

Over in Europe, I hear you'd go out and do a little playing on off-nights?

Yeah, a little bit. In Dublin, Soozie brought us to a place that she had known, I guess it was a famous place, the Dubliners had started there, and we had a little session and played with the band there—that was fun.

SOOZIE TYRELL
VIOLIN & VOCALS

It seems like you're pretty much the key here, in terms of bringing a lot of this band together.

I suppose so! Some of the guys I've known for many, many years, worked with for many years. Like Charlie and I—we go way back to the Buster Poindexter days. I think we met around 1986. And we've worked together doing duos and trios and fun little projects.

I knew you did Buster together—can you tell me about the rest of it?

Charlie and I had a trio, with a bass player, Rick [Palley]—for a while it was Tony Garnier, who is Bob Dylan's bass player, then Tony got busy with Bob—and we used to play cabarets together. I would sing a lot of saucy old jazz songs—some Alberta Hunter, Dinah Washington, the more obscure catalogs of female singers, some June Christie and Anita O'Day—and that was a lot of fun. We did that for a few years, playing different clubs in Manhattan.

And how about Larry?

Larry Eagle I knew from back when I had my country band, Soozie and High in the Saddle; we met when we used to play City Limits. Larry played with a band called Peach Fish Pie, and lots of times we crossed paths going to see each other's bands.

Then I met Jeremy, the bass player, and Sam Bardfeld, when I was asked to join their band, the Gotham Playboys. Jeremy, Larry, and Sam are all original members; the original keyboard player and accordionist is a lovely man named Will Holshouser.

Jeremy and Charlie told me about Will being out of the country!

Right! It was quite bizarre, and we felt so bad for him. But Bruce heard Charlie and loved Charlie's playing, so... just one of those things. I think he would have loved to have been out with us. Also there's Red Suydam, the guitarist in the Gotham Playboys, and also the co-lead singer—he and I share the vocals.

And why was he not a part of the proceedings? Did he not come out and play any of the parties?

He played the parties, yes, but I guess his role in the band was sort of what Bruce does—singing lead and playing guitar. So I guess Bruce didn't feel that he was needed, at the time. And then Frank Bruno, Bruce's cousin, was in town when we started doing some of these recordings... and there, we had another guitar player.

So you knew Larry before—was he what got you the call to play with the Gotham Playboys?

I actually joined a group which they were all involved with called The Pinballs. And this goes back to another gentleman, Brian Miller, whose main gig was as a food critic for *The New York Times*. *[Laughs]* This is a long, entangled story! Brian had seen me perform with Buster many, many years ago, and thought, jeez, if I could get her to sing some gigs with us, wouldn't that be fun? And it was basically through Brian Miller that I met Sam and Jeremy and Will. So yes, I had already known Larry Eagle. But it was Brian who saw me and brought me in. One of the first gigs I did with them, we performed at the James Beard food awards—the awards that go out to chefs *[laughs]*. Every gig that we did with Brian was related to food. Gourmet food.

Good eating along the way?

Oh yes—every party we played it was wonderful gourmet food, the best chefs in the world. Not just in this country, but the world.

What would be a typical repertoire for the Gotham Playboys? I get the impression that it's really Cajun/zydeco-based.

It was Cajun/zydeco based, but quite eclectic. The range of material that these gentlemen play is extraordinary—Sam's quite an accomplished jazz violinist. So we played all sorts of parties, weddings, and bar mitzvahs. That was my first experience learning Cajun songs in-depth and singing in French, or Cajun-French. But we did cross over into country, country & western. If we played the cocktail hour at a wedding it would be jazz, probably instrumentals; sometimes I would get them gigs, like we played New Year's Eve at Lutece for a couple of years before they closed. And for something like that we played just rock 'n' roll, R&B, we'd throw in a little Cajun and zydeco—it was just fun. We always had such a good time playing together, and that always warranted that the audience would have a good time.

How did the party at Bruce's come about?

Patti and Bruce asked me if I knew any bands that might be appropriate at one of their farm parties. And immediately: the Gotham Playboys! I felt very proud to show off these guys to Bruce and Patti, because I just adored playing with them—and they were such great guys to boot. It was obviously the right choice.

Do you recall what kind of stuff you were playing there?

Well, a lot of different stuff. We'd start out mostly playing Cajun and zydeco, and some country & western. And then Bruce got up—and myself, and Patti, and Lisa—I had taught them some of the songs that we used to sing when I had High in the Saddle, so you know, we'd sing some bluegrass numbers, three-part harmony. Bruce and Patti would sing some Everly Brothers or something, and then Bruce would have his guitar and pretty much stay for the rest of the afternoon up on stage, playing John Fogerty and everything.

The band was all able to follow that?

Yes—they've got an extensive knowledge of songs, all of them, as far as popular songs.

And so the first session for the Pete Seeger material, in '97—I get the impression that came pretty quickly, is that right?

Fairly, yes—it was probably a few months after the first or second farm party, I can't remember. It was probably after the second farm party that we played. I think we did—we did maybe three parties.

Ah, okay, I wasn't sure if there was more than one. And I love the serendipity of it all—if you guys hadn't played those parties, Bruce probably just would have sat in his home studio alone and put together "We Shall Overcome," and that would have been that.

RENE VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

Possibly, yeah! That's a fairly good assumption, if you're going to assume. We recorded at least five songs together, if my memory serves me correctly, so that's what really got him thinking. It wasn't just one, he had a choice—he wanted to have a choice of which one he liked best. He just kept going back and listening to those recordings and loved the rawness of it, that it was so beautifully raw—you know, most of the songs were the first take.

We might have done two, no more than three takes of a song, because he didn't want us to *learn* it and screw it up by knowing it too well! So a lot of those are first takes, they just had the most intensity and original ideas flying out of people's heads.

And then this stuff sits around for eight years, and as you say, Bruce keeps coming back to it, but were you aware that that was sort of still on the radar and that something more could come of it? When did that hit you?

It didn't hit me until last year, when he had us come in to do a marathon recording session. Same exact guys, and we recorded I think close to ten songs, something like that, in about 12 hours. And that's when I thought, "What's going on here?" And this past January, again, we went in for another 11- or 12-hour session.

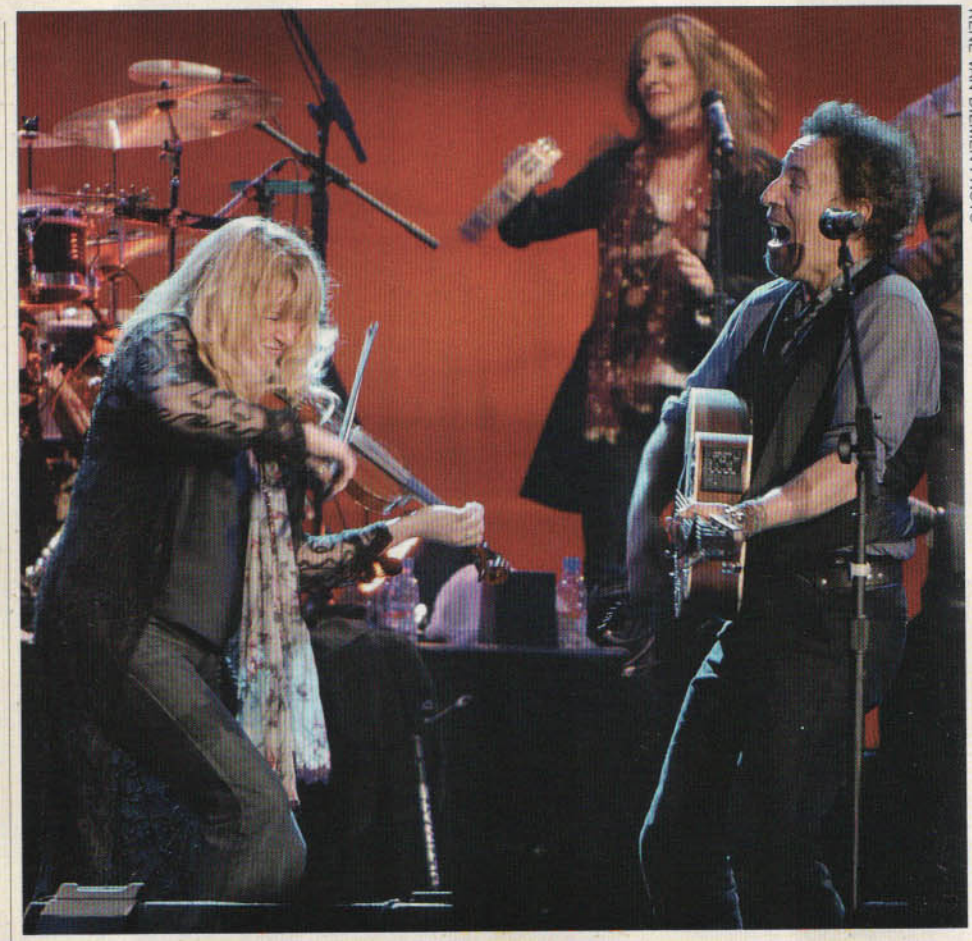
I thought it was something that would be released at some point, but I thought maybe later in Bruce's life. I never expected it to come out this soon. But the timing is brilliant. And I should know better, after working with him, that he's a step ahead all the time, you know? *[laughs]* It's just such a great time to come out with such a raw record like this, and the messages in the lyrics are still as pertinent today as they were 100 or 150 years ago. And in an age now when music is almost becoming unhuman, with ProTools and all that, it's so refreshing to hear recordings of how people recorded 50, 60, 70 years ago: a couple of mics in the room, and away we go!

And on stage, too—I don't know how much of it is becoming more rigid as you play night after night, but it seems like there continues to be a whole lot of spontaneity on stage.

Yeah, there's so much soloing, everybody has such an opportunity to shine up there. And you want to keep it fresh, to try different things, so you solo a little differently. And Bruce is always keeping it fresh by, at soundchecks, which end up kind of being rehearsals, working up more of his material—totally rewritten versions of some of his songs, like "Further On (Up the Road)."

That was a fun surprise the other night.

God, wasn't that great? It just totally amazes me that he can take a perfectly great song that he's already written, and rewrite it! Everything is completely changed, except some of the lyrics.



RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

That blows my mind, honestly—the ability to rehear something that you've been playing a particular way for a long time, or maybe have already gone through two or three rearrangements of, like "Atlantic City."

Right, right. Totally amazing, and it's so wonderful to hear the audience totally embrace it, also. It's not that they need to hear it the way that they are used to hearing it. A lot of concertgoers going to see bands—especially older bands—they go to hear a particular song the way they want to hear it. But Bruce fans, they're embracing whatever.

That's true, and to me that's a big part of the fun of the show when it comes to those Springsteen originals, to hear things in a completely different way

Yeah, and you wonder, what's he going to do next, you know?

Well, do you have any sense of the answer to that? Have you been working up anything else?

No—well, there some ideas on some songs, but I'm probably not in a good position to talk about it, really *[laughs]*.

One song I'd love to hear is "Shut Out the Light." With your fiddle that's on there already, that's one that could go some neat places.

Oh, right, right.

And thematically too, of course, it seems like it would be a good fit with "Mrs. McGrath." That's my vote, anyway... So tell me, how does this compare to playing with the E Street Band? Obviously other than Patti and Bruce, you're the only one up there who has experience in both bands.

It's very different, it's a very different feeling. I adore the E Street Band; this project is much looser, and you pretty much want to keep a smile on your face, except for maybe one or two numbers. A lot of mayhem up there, a lot of shenanigans. Boy, I have never seen so much ham, except maybe in an Italian deli. I look at the E Street Band as quite a bit more... I don't know if this is quite the right word, but, *dignified. [Laughs]*

As opposed to a hootenanny.

Exactly.

And how has your role changed? You've pretty quickly gone from being the new kid to being the veteran up there; does that give you a different function? Do you ever serve as an intermediary between Bruce and the band members?

Not really, not in any formal way. I mean, because I've done a tour with Bruce before, I might have a little advice here or there if somebody has a question. But people feel that they can go to Bruce. I feel like, yeah, a little bit of a veteran, in that I not only did the last tour but had done other gigs with

Bruce through the years, and the number of [his] albums that I've worked on.

What was the first gig you did with Bruce, onstage? I certainly remember you turning up on the *Joad* tour.

I think it was just before the *Joad* days—the Kristen Ann Carr fundraiser at Madison Square Garden.

The end of the '93 tour, that's right.

Yeah, I think that was the first time. And what was so freaky about that for me—there were going to be two sections to the show with a little breather in the middle, a short intermission. There were a lot of other artists, like Terence Trent D'Arby and Joe Ely and a lot of special guests. And I thought I was going on with Patti in the second half of the show. So before the show I had my hair up in curlers, and Terry [Magovern] comes and says, "Bruce wants you in his dressing room right now." So I run to the dressing room, and he plays me this song and he says, "I want you to start with a violin solo... and we're on in five minutes, so get those curlers out!"

So I learned the song in the few minutes that he gave me. He said, "Oh, you'll get it, it's only three chords." And I'm like, "Okay... can you tell me what key it's in, please?" *[Laughs]*

That's funny—and kind of an omen, in terms of how things go on this tour.

Oh, definitely. Things haven't changed in that respect! But it was exciting, and I was petrified at the same time. Because it was the first real live thing I'd done with Bruce, and I started the show—there was a spotlight on just me and the violin, and I played alone for 16 bars. And then the spotlight hit Bruce, and he came in with the acoustic guitar, and holy moley! I could not hear myself *at all*, the crowd was so loud. My knees were shaking. But I was loving every minute of it.

Loud crowds brings me back to this tour, and Europe—it sounds like things went particularly well over there.

Yes, oh my God, we were all just stunned.

It's pretty amazing that all these very, very American songs went over so well—but I guess that's pretty typical of the European Springsteen crowd.

That's true, that's true. They just can't get enough of him. And it's so much fun to hear them singing along with us in their accents. *[Laughs]* You know, when you're in France and you hear *[adopts French accent]: "Pay me my money down..."*

I'm curious to hear about the rehearsals in Asbury—were they pretty intensive?

Yes, they were. We had to get there very early, because the horn players still needed to get to the city by a certain hour to do *Conan*. And then we had the alternate horn players after Richie and Mark left around noon or one, I think. So yeah, those rehearsals were pretty long. Seven to eight hours a day, four days a week. There was so much to learn. Bruce wanted to rehearse everything we recorded, meaning even the songs that didn't make the record, and then he also wanted to work some of his own material into the show.

I also wanted to ask you about Sam, and having another fiddle player on stage. I guess you're used to playing with him in the Gotham Playboys, but what's that dynamic like?

Well, it certainly adds to the bigger sound, but the other thing is that we're such completely different players. He comes from more of a jazz background. We both started classical, but I took steps into the more rock and country world. And though he's brilliant at playing Cajun and zydeco, he's brilliant with the more Stephane Grappelli type, too, and he's got his own style within that realm. He's got his own album out, also—I think he's got two or three. Jazz instrumental.

And he's written a book on Latin violin.

Yes, he does a lot of Latin, too. He's a hell of a player, and quite accomplished. Whereas me, I'm more the sort of rootsy, soulful type. I mean, he's soulful too, but... I do the grit and grind.

Tell me about Patti—where she's been, first of all, and I also got the impression that she was really involved with the vocal arrangements, and I wonder if you can talk about that?

Definitely, yes—she had everything to do with arranging these vocals. That's what she does. And she made sure that everything was very well set, because she knew that she might not be making all these shows, because of the kids, they're all at an age where—there's a lot at home that she doesn't want to miss.

How different is it on stage when she's not there?

We miss her terribly. On the *Rising* tour, and this tour too, I just find the eye contact and the smiles that we share on that stage are so grounding for me. That's my buddy over there. And I feel even more secure. She's like a beacon there, you know?

What about your solo work—is there a follow-up to *White Lines* in the works?

Yes, I have a little time this summer to actually finish up some writing; I think I probably have half the record written. But it's a matter of finding my direction for this next record, which I believe is going to be very different from *White Lines*. I won't know until I get into the studio and actually record it. And I want to have a lot of material to pick and choose from and then see how it all comes out. I've been talking with Larry Campbell, and he's excited to produce it for me. So it's just a matter of putting the tunes together and the time together.

RENE VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

ED MANION MARK PENDER RICHIE "LaBAMBA" ROSENBER

SAXOPHONE TRUMPET TROMBONE

Man, where to start? Mark, Richie, Ed, I know you guys have known each other for a long time... and then we've got the rookie over here. Art, let's start with you, how did you get roped into this?

Art: In January I got a call from George [Travis]. I've learned, whenever I get a call for something, I never ask, "Who gave you my name?" But it was the drummer, Larry Eagle. So they had recorded all this stuff already, but I had no idea what was happening at that point. I play tin whistle and tuba, sousaphone, so that's the call I got. So I said sure, how soon is it? A couple of days?

I work a lot as a trombone player. Some tuba—I mean, I've been playing it since junior high school, I had just a couple days to warm it up and get ready. I went down there and did my first recording session—it was just with Bruce and Toby [Scott], the engineer, playing with the tracks that these guys had laid down already. I think I'm the only one who overdubbed, except for some vocals. It was an infectious track—and I was just like, "Oh, this is gonna be *easy.*"

What was it, the first thing you did?

Art: Honestly, I can't remember... I know "Buffalo Gals" was in there... I'm on five cuts, I think. Maybe "Eyes on the Prize," I can't remember. Some of them I'm doing sousaphone on now, I didn't record on. But that's how I got in here, and then as I got to know Bruce, he said, "Hey, man, you going to bring your trombone?"—on the road, you know—and I said "Sure, man, I want to keep my chops up!" So we hit the rehearsal, and bit by bit I brought all my toys out.

What else—you've got a mandolin up there, right?

Art: Yeah, I told him that one of the last of my hobbies that I hadn't brought in yet is the mandolin. So he said "Yeah, bring it in, we'll try it!" So I've been building up callouses over the last several months. All along they kept saying, "Well, maybe we're going to do some more," then I got called to record more; then "Maybe we'll do a spring tour"... I'm having the time of my life.

In high school, I played in a jug band, I was in that for years—we had about seven years of that. And so I knew all of these songs. So it's not like I'm some real jazz kind of guy...

LaBamba: You're a jazzer.

Art: I'm a jazzer! *[All laugh]* But I don't look down on this music. It's all heart and soul—it's beautiful.

What about the rest of you guys—is this music that's close to your heart?

Ed: Oh, very much so.

Mark: The thing is, when we did those sessions, he gave us such a chance to improvise. He didn't say "play this," or "play that"—sometimes he would just say: *"Horns!"* And we'd start blowing, and we'd be improvising, and so a lot of it came from our experience of improvisation and just having a good time playing together.

LaBamba: Yeah!

And my impression is, that's the stuff—the horns, the improvisation—that really took the record to a new place. Bruce has said something like, "I don't know why I brought the horns in, but it's a good thing I did, because when I threw it out to them, they took it to Dixieland, and all of a sudden we're there, and that wouldn't have happened otherwise."

Ed: The music is very roots-oriented, so it came very naturally to us as a horn section. And there's a lot of blues influence, and gospel, and folk....

LaBamba: Western movie themes, too.

Ed: We've been playing rock 'n' roll for 30 years—this is the original music.

Art: And these three guys, man... being part of this horn section, it's like magic how fast shit happens. It's amazing.

And I gotta say, frankly, you guys are making the tour for me—half the time I'm forgetting to watch Bruce because the horn section is so much fun to watch.

LaBamba: Don't print that part. *[All laugh]*

Mark: Good point! Good point!

Ed: I like my job.

Mark: The funny thing is, I think when we were recording it, some of it we were like, "Man, you aren't going to *keep* that, are you? We weren't sure what we played, even!" They were just first takes.

Did you listen to playbacks at all?

Mark: We didn't get the chance to listen to playbacks! We assumed some stuff we'd

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

THE HORNS

ART BARON
TUBA

probably have to fix, and the fact that it was kind of chaotic and improvised took another left turn...

Ed: That's what Bruce wanted, he wanted it to be spontaneous. He didn't want to teach everybody the songs, per se, so we would go home and learn our parts and arrange parts... he wanted it so that the creative spontaneity would come out. I think it worked.

Art: And it's still working that way—we're learning tunes in soundchecks, it's great.

LaBamba: This group of people is unbelievable.

How does this compare to previous tours, like the *Tunnel* tour, in terms of that kind of spontaneity?

Ed: Well, same intensity, as far as rehearsal and as far as work ethics, learning songs, and putting your heart and soul into the music.

Mark: He's really generous with us on this, too. We're like, solo, solo, solo.... That's what makes this really different, and a really cool thing for us, because this band gets to blow a lot—Richie blows a lot, I below a lot, Art blows a lot—and he's been really generous with the spotlight. And that just makes it fun as all hell.

Ed: And it's spontaneous, but at the same time it's very, very organized, and very worked out. Just like the *Tunnel of Love* tour, you know, we rehearsed for maybe a month before we actually went on tour. And the same thing here. He has a concept of what he wants, and it's just not thrown together. It's very organized and very conceptualized.

There's a structure, and then within the structure everybody gets to go nuts.

Ed: Yes. It's just a great band to work with. Everybody in the band is such a professional, and a great musician—the musicianship on all the instruments, it's just a pleasure to work with everybody.

Now, the parties that the Gotham Playboys played... you guys were part of those too, right?

LaBamba: Yeah.

Mark: Not formally—we weren't hired to play the party at his house...

LaBamba: Just come up and jam.

Mark: Right, we all came up and jammed. But those guys did—it *seemed* like they played eight or nine hours or something, it was like they'd never stop playing. And we'd come up the last hour, or two, or three, you know? But they would be there when we got there, and there when we left.

Ed: So this project started in 1997, from that party you're talking about. Richie and I jammed with the band, and he really liked the sound of the trombone and the tenor sax, used that in the original session, for "We Shall Overcome." We did about six songs in 1997, and then we added the trumpet after that initial session.

That's right, Mark, you were doing something else at the time, right?

Mark: Yeah, I went out to my grandmother's 97th birthday, and I didn't go to that party. But I went to a couple of the others, it was the same guys playing, we all jammed and stuff, and it was a lot of fun.

At what point did you have the realization that this thing would turn into something, an album or a tour? Did that not really come until...

Mark: A couple *months* ago? Yeah.

LaBamba: Yeah. *[All laugh]*

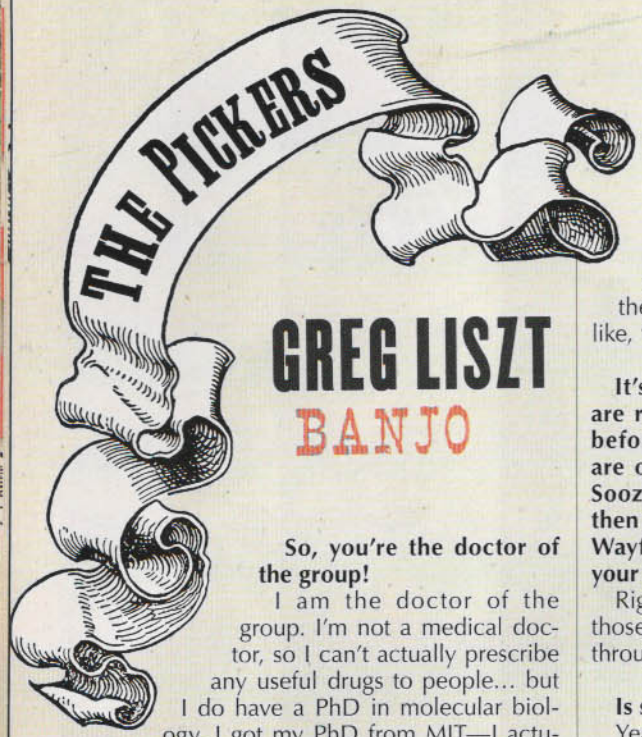
Art: And all along it was like, "We're *thinking* about touring...." They had us get together, for the first time, and we did that first rehearsal, remember, to see how it would go. They'd play the CD, then we'd do the tune... it was amazing. And Bruce loved it right away, from what I gathered. So they set it up. But it was always, "Okay, let us know what you have on your schedule after April something," all of a sudden they're saying the middle of March, and "Maybe you ought to let us know from here on out" *[laughs]*. It was going full tilt.

Art, I also wanted ask: You were the connection with Marc Anthony Thompson?

Art: Yeah, man! During rehearsals they were bringing in people to audition for the singers. Marc has Chocolate Genius, and he emailed me one day—because I sit in and play with him once in a while, I've recorded on his new album—he emailed me, saying "Can you come sit in with me for this gig at Tonic?" I got about three words into my reply, and I thought, "Holy shit! Marc would be great for this!" I said, "Marc—answer this email real quick, I'm going to call you, you wanna come do this, should I call George [Travis]...." And apparently they had heard him before...

Sure, there was that *Nebraska* tribute concert.

Art: Exactly. Marc was in it, and they had hung out with him some, and I guess they hadn't thought about him for this tour. But once he came down, it was a natural. So it's all my fault.



GREG LISZT
BANJO

So, you're the doctor of the group!

I am the doctor of the group. I'm not a medical doctor, so I can't actually prescribe any useful drugs to people... but I do have a PhD in molecular biology. I got my PhD from MIT—I actually had to skip my hooding ceremony because we had a show that day.

Oh wow, it was that recent. So are you a Bostonian?

Yeah, I sort of consider myself one; I've been living there for about seven years. I originally come from Charlottesville, Virginia. I went to college at Yale, then I moved up to Boston for graduate school. Though these days it feels like I spend more time in New York City or on the road than I do in Boston.

How did you get the call for this? With Mark Clifford staying home, was there an open audition for banjo players?

It wasn't exactly open. Larry Eagle, the drummer, recommended me, from what I understand. Larry and I had played together in this large, genre-busting ensemble called the Wayfaring Strangers, which is a nine-piece jazz/bluegrass fusion band. We met each other doing a tour of Louisiana, about a year ago.

Actually, there was another episode where Larry and I played with the Wayfaring Strangers, along with the Utah Symphony Orchestra. A little-known piece of trivia about me and Larry is that the two of us battled the Utah Symphony Orchestra in a version of "Duelling Banjos." That actually happened.

Who won?

I don't know, it's hard to say—it was kind of like armies fighting on different embankments, using their artillery in totally the wrong direction instead of attacking each other. It wasn't much of a head-on duel. We would play some banjo licks, then they would come back at us with, like, "Ode to Joy."

It's wild how all these band members are related, who's played with each other before, and how many different bands are on the family tree. I was talking with Soozie about the Gotham Playboys, and then the Pinballs... so now we've got the Wayfaring Strangers. And then you've got your band, Crooked Still.

Right, I'm going to be touring around with those guys when this leg of the tour ends, through the summer.

Is somebody filling in for you right now?

Yeah—I didn't miss that many shows, but there were a few that I missed, and a couple good friends of mine filled in for me on the banjo.

What did your fellow band members think when you said, "Hey, you know what, I'm gonna be touring with Springsteen for a little while."

They thought I was lying! At first they thought I was putting them on. They're obviously really excited—they're some of my best friends, so of course they're really excited about this amazing opportunity. It did present the problem of having to find a substitute for some shows, but we solved that, so: happily ever after.

Were you a Springsteen fan coming into this?

Oh my God! My earliest memory of buying records in a record store—I remember so clearly waiting in line outside the local record store the day that live box set *[Live/1975-'85]* came out. I waited outside the record store with my brother and my dad. And of course, the line was all the way out the door, I guess that's how popular the thing was back then. I remember we got back home and I listened to that all through my childhood. And then I always kept up with what Bruce has been doing. So when I got the call to audition, it was particularly surreal—this guy whose music I've been listening to since I was literally seven years old.

How long did it take you to settle in and feel at home with things?

That was instantaneous, actually. I bet a lot of fans wonder what it's like to all of a sudden get a call to go jam with Bruce Springsteen, and what it would be like when the jamming actually starts. I didn't know what it was going to be like—I thought I was probably going to be nervous as hell. But as soon as he started playing and singing, it completely calmed my nerves, and I started have so much *fun*. I almost forgot I was having an audition I was having so much fun. And that's how it is on stage: I almost forget that we're playing in front of

GUY ACETO PHOTO

thousands of people, because I'm having such a good time.

That's certainly the vibe that we get out in the audience. It seems like everyone is just having a blast up there.
It's all for real. It's not an act!

And sometimes you really don't know what's coming next? I got the impression that "Further On (Up the Road)" the other night was catching everybody by surprise.
Yeah, Bruce likes to keep us on our toes.

That's more fun than it is nervewracking?
Oh yeah—nothing on stage is nerve-wracking. As long as Bruce is up there, the energy is just so good, and everybody's having such a good time. It's calming to the nerves, but electrifying to the soul.

Did it take you any getting used to, playing in front of these kinds of crowds? What was that like?
The arena format, I gotta say, was not one that I had a whole lot of experience with. My background is mostly playing folk festivals and folk clubs and stuff. Even when the audiences get really big there, it's still a very different experience from being in an arena with a really, really loud band. But you know, we had plenty of time to practice in New Jersey.

So, those rehearsals. Larry recommends you, you get the call...
Well, when I got the call to audition, I knew I was gonna need a pickup in my banjo—an amplification apparatus —and pickups do exist for acoustic instruments. But a lot of people who play this kind of music tend to just play their instruments into a microphone. They just don't really need that heavily electrified thing, because they're not trying to achieve the same epic magnitude of volume and filling up space. So I got the call to audition on a Friday, and I had to go up to New Jersey on a Monday. I was down in Virginia at the time, and I knew I was going to have to get a pickup installed—I think I might actually have told them I already had one, but I didn't!

So I called every music store in the state of Virginia, and none of them happened to have a banjo pickup in stock. I ended up calling a store in New York and had them overnight one to me for Saturday delivery—critical that it be delivered on Saturday. So Saturday rolls around, and of course it doesn't show up. And I'm like, "Oh, shit!" So I call the music store, but they're closed for the day, I call them on Sunday and they're closed on Sunday... I call them Monday morning. This is the day I have to be at the audition, and I have no pickup in my banjo. And one has not arrived in the mail. And I have no means of getting one. So they track the package, and it turns out they had accidentally written the first line of my billing address instead of the first line of my shipping address. And so I thought, "Aw, shit, I'm ruined!" But they *did* write the correct zip code, so after about 20 minutes of just stressing out, I get a phone call back from the store saying, "Actually, it turns out your banjo pickup is sitting in a warehouse right outside of Charlottesville," where I was. At that point I knew it was some kind of divine intervention.

So I went out there, got the pickup, and I had to barge into the local music store on the way out of town and pay the guy to install it right away. There were a couple of false starts—one of the wires was soldered wrong, and it didn't work, and time was ticking down, and I was about to miss my flight... and then finally, with literally no time to spare—if I had left any later I would have missed my flight to the audition—we got it working. I played about three notes on it, it sounded great, and I flew up to Asbury.

And it continued to work?
Yeah! It's the same one I use now. The sound guys liked the sound of it a lot, so if they like it, I'm happy.

One thing I have to ask you about: I was looking at your bio online, and I'm reading about a "four-fingered technique," and I'm reading about "infinite velocity banjo style...."
Yeah, those are all top secret phenomena I worked on when I was in grad school.

So is that all bullshit, or...
No, no, totally for real! Most banjo players, from the bluegrass tradition, pluck the instrument with three fingers. And I came up with a system for plucking it with four fingers, and it tends to work really, really well, and it expands the possibilities of what you can play on the banjo.

Did you catch any of Springsteen's last tour, the *Devils & Dust* tour?
No, I didn't get out to any of those.

Well, he broke out a banjo—but it was a banjitar, actually, played like a guitar. Have you given him any lessons on the real thing? Has he been interested to pick it up?
I had heard about that, actually. But no. I know he has a couple of banjos, and I know he's way into that kind of stuff. But I don't have any stories about giving the Boss a banjo lesson, unfortunately. Maybe some day!

So what's your plan after the tour? Will you pursue something in molecular biology?
At this point it seems increasingly less likely. I'm pretty much planned out until the end of the summer, I'll be with my band Crooked Still, and I'll be playing music and seeing how far it'll take me.

FRANK BRUNO, JR.
GUITAR & VOCALS

So, Cousin Frankie! How's this experience been for you?
Man, it's awesome. It's just unbelievable.

Have you done anything like this before?
No, I haven't. My experience is limited to coffeehouses in college.

What's your musical background? We've heard the story about your dad teaching Bruce—did he teach you to play guitar?
He gave me his first guitar that he had had. He taught me the A chord, a couple of chords... but that was the extent of it. I didn't really learn guitar from him, I picked it up on my own. For the most part, I was exposed to music at a young age.

So I played out in college, but then as I finished college, I got married, had kids, and music kind of took a back seat to everything. So I haven't done anything since, except for songwriting. I do that on my own—I've got equipment and I record. But even that, in the last couple years, has slowed.

Have you done anything with that?
I've got a few songs on a CD—I've got a lot of stuff that's still on my recorder that I haven't burned to a CD. I figure one day I'll get to it and expand on it. When I get back to Wilmington—which is where I'm from, Wilmington, North Carolina—I'm going to pursue doing evenings out, and then songwriting again. I've got a lot of friends who have done the same thing—you know, played guitar in the past—so we're all going to get together.

So you've been inspired.
Yeah, exactly.

Before this, were you doing traditional singer-songwriter stuff? Who have you listened to and looked up to?
Well, obviously, Bruce—at a very young age, we used to go to shows. He was the major one. And then Dylan, Neil Young.... I liked the guitar guys back in high school, you know, the Joe Satrianis and Yngwies and all that. I played more electric then, I wasn't into songwriting. But then once I got into college I got into the songwriters. Of course Mark Knopfler is a huge one; Dire Straits, I liked them from the get-go. And I still like his stuff.

How did you get the call for this?
Eight years ago or so, I just asked Bruce if I could come watch him record something at some point. It was just a random question. I got a random phone call on Halloween saying, "Hey, I've been asked to do some songs for a Pete Seeger [tribute], if you'd like to come up and watch tomorrow... come on up!" So I drove up

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

from Wilmington, and I was just planning on watching. And of course, being the nice guy he is, Bruce said, "You wanna play on a few?" So I said, "Absolutely."

And had you brought your guitar?

I had my guitar. I ended up using theirs, but I was prepared. So I got to record on those, and that was awesome, and one of the songs came out on that album... and then, of course, it just snowballed seven years later.

And during that time in between, did you have much contact? Or were you aware that any of this could come back up again later?

I had no idea. I thought it was done. I imagine everyone in the band—everybody who was on the first recording—thought it was done. I didn't know anything was going to happen, and then as I say, it just snowballed. And even when we did the recent recording, those last two sessions, we still didn't know he'd take it to another level and do a tour.

Even when you first came in for rehearsals, you didn't necessarily know that there were going to be X amount of dates on the road?

No. There was talk of it, and then I was getting word, "Hey, we're just gonna hear how it sounds, just to feel it out. If it works live, great; if not, then nothing will come of it." I had no thoughts on what it was going to be, I had no idea of the magnitude, how many dates we were going to do. I thought it was just going to be a few—and then... here we are!

What were those rehearsals like in Asbury?

Not too intense—but definitely more intense than it is right now. He threw out a lot of different songs. But nobody knew what to expect. Is this just to see how it sounds together in an auditorium? Are we going to have the momentum to even be able to do it live? And so once we got there and started doing some of the songs, they kind of took shape on their own. Just like the album did.

You were onstage for the *Rising* tour and the Reunion tour, if I recall?

That's right. I was 19 the first time I did it, and you know, it was a different thing when I did it back then. Because I just hopped up, and he said, "Yeah, just have fun with it!" I think I was plugged in, but wasn't wired to the sound system.

And now the pressure's on...

Now you gotta actually sound good!

Especially as Bruce says, while he's hamming, you've got to actually be holding it down.

Yeah, so this is a different thing.

And how much of a challenge has that been? Is the tour just a whole lot of fun, or has it been nervewracking in any way?

Oh, it's been a *lot* of fun. For me, a little bit nervewracking, just because I wasn't used to playing in front of a large audience. But I caught on, was encouraged by everybody, and so it feels pretty good.

How was New Orleans for you?

Unreal. It was very cool. In Asbury there were, what, 2,500 people there, maybe?

Right, and then you jump from that to 70,000! Did you get a chance to go around the city much when you were there?

We did—we walked all around the night before, and a couple of the guys brought their horns and played on the streets. They had some local bands that were playing, people chimed in... it was a lot of fun.

MARTY RIFKIN
PEDAL STEEL & DOBRO

So you've recorded with Bruce before... this time it's flipped: you were not on the record, but came on for the tour. How did that come about?

I got the call, because I guess once Bruce decided what he was doing, I guess he thought of me. Thought I might be a nice addition, so.... here I am.

How much touring have you done?

I used to, in the '80s, and then I stopped once my kids were born. I went out with Rosie Flores, people like that. And then I just decided I didn't want to miss my kids growing up at the time.

Well, this is a good one to get back out there with.

Any time Bruce needs anything, I'm there.

How does this compare with what you've done with him in the past, like the *Tom Joad* record? It seems like a very different kind of project.

Yeah, except it's always Bruce—you know, he's that focal point. And what I do is try to react to what he's doing. And it's very easy when you have somebody like him *[laughs]*. I know I'll sound like I'm fawning... but it's really true.

This has really been a great experience. The guys in the band—so many of them are from New York, and here I am the guy from California who comes out, out of the clear blue, and they have been so gracious, and arms out. So many of them now—or all of them, actually—they're going to be my friends forever. We're tight.

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

GUY ACETO PHOTO

So it's been a good touring experience off stage, too.

Off stage it's just wonderful—a lot of great friendships.

I hear that over in Europe a bunch of the band went out and played at clubs in Oslo and Dublin—were you a part of that?

Well, I didn't have an instrument with me, but I came and cheered them on and was part of it that way. My problem was that I just didn't have an instrument close by. Because who's got a steel guitar floating around? That's a little tougher!

Can you go through all the instruments that you're playing? Once in a while I'll look up and there's something new... last night I saw you playing mandolin.

Yep, mandolin a little bit, and dobro—which some people think is like a lap steel or something like that, it's the one with the "hubcap" in it—I play a lot of dobro, and a lot of pedal steel. Oh, and glockenspiel, too, can't forget the glockenspiel!

At what point did the band kind of feel like a cohesive unit? Did it take a little while for that to happen? Or did things click right away in Asbury?

I think it clicked right away. Getting over the idea of what it was all about might have taken a little bit of time. But with everybody paying attention, listening to what everybody else is doing musically...

It seems like that's the key to this tour.

That's the key. Especially with so many people—you can put a lot of people together and get a cacophony, or you can put a lot of people together and get music.

And is the answer to that traffic control on Bruce's part? Or is the answer, you've got a bunch of pros who know how to listen to each other? Or both?

It's gonna be both—here are a lot of people who know that Bruce *would* have to be traffic control, so let's avoid him having to do too much traffic control!

Quite often backstage, before we go on, we break into some sort of spontaneous music. Greg will turn around playing the banjo, Charlie will jump in with his accordion, I'll jump in with dobro, Frank grabs a guitar, next thing you know all the singers are around... it's always kind of different material, but it just sort of happens, and we go for about ten minutes of playing something impromptu, and then, "Okay, let's get ready for the show!"

Where is that taking place? In a hallway, or in the dressing room...

It could be anywhere. Sometimes Bruce walks in, and he dives right in and does it. There are various stages of it.

Any particular songs? Are you playing covers, or just jamming on something?

Whatever somebody starts—could be a song, could be a jam—it just shows you the vibe of the band, that everybody is so together. The horns will start playing along, and it's a little bit of joy before we get to go out and have the bigger joy.

One of the big joys of the show to me is "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" And that really seems like a big spotlight for you on that one.

It's great to play—the spirit of the song, what the song is saying, what Bruce is saying through it, and musically it's very fun to play. You get to dig in a little bit and go for it.

Is it a highlight for you? Is there one moment of the show that's a favorite?

There's so much spirit going on through the whole show, it's hard to pick a moment. That's a nice one, but to be honest, when the song starts.... I don't know about everybody else, but I end up going to some... you know, "that place." I think everybody goes there. And so I don't know if it's a moment; it's just another "place" to go to during the course of the night.

How was New Orleans?

It was unbelievable. It was very interesting, because it was a lot of people that were *there*, not a lot of people that came for a specific reason, to hear Bruce and us, or whatever—they just happened to be there. It was fascinating, because you see them all out there, everybody's just milling around, and all of a sudden it's like their attention starts getting a little deeper and deeper. Halfway through, people were crying. That's when we feel so blessed to be able to be there and be a part of that.

You hear "grown men were crying," and it sounds like such a cliché and hyperbole, but that was true!

Oh yeah, especially there, just because it was so emotional. And it had rained—that morning, looking out at the field, I mean, there were geese in the field! And by the afternoon it had dried out. And I think that people could tell just how much Bruce really cared, you know, and it was a great ride for all of us to be a part of. That's why you forget about those "moments." It becomes a big picture—you want to be just as musical as you can, and it sort of takes away the "oh, this is *my* moment" feeling. There's not a lot of ego up there on stage.

How spontaneous do things continue to be? It really seems like anything can happen at any moment.

Absolutely.

And is that really true?

It is really true—anything can happen at any moment. It's a nice feeling, in that we can tell that Bruce trusts us. And I think we have enough experience that we can sort of flip and flop around and get to where we need to go. But we pay attention for when something different can happen—it's very spontaneous. And I think we all enjoy it. There's never a panic, there's never that kind of, "Holy smoke, how are we gonna get through this?" It's more of an, "Okay, this is gonna be fun, let's see where it goes." It's very bold—it's really great to see it happen, and see it unfold, because I think it brings the crowd into it. They don't feel like there's this show that's written out somewhere and done exactly the same way every night. It's always going to be different.

I never know where a solo's going to go...

And *we* sort of don't even know.

How would you compare the crowds in Europe and the U.S., and how much difference does a crowd make to what's happening on stage?

Even the crowds that aren't as enthusiastic as Europe, they're still great. There are still people loving the show. When we were in Europe and we heard the rush of air just coming from all the people, that kind of electricity, it's *very* exciting. But even when there's not as boisterous a crowd, it's still exciting. And I don't think anyone would ever think of phoning anything in. We're still thrilled—in *soundcheck* we're thrilled.

MARC ANTHONY THOMPSON

"CHOCOLATE GENIUS" GUITAR & VOCALS

I have to say, here at the office we've been big fans of yours for awhile. [Chocolate Genius'] *God Music* got a lot of spin on our stereo here, so it was quite a shock when we found out you'd be playing with Bruce.

It was a shock for me, too, as you can imagine.

Exactly. So how did that come together?

There's a lot of serendipity, the six degrees of separation. I know Marc Ribot really well, and Marc Ribot played with me on a show that I didn't find out until later that Bruce saw. We did a show called *Sessions at West 54th Street*. Bruce had seen that and I didn't know it, so I guess I was kind of on his radar. I actually met him for the first time when I did that *Nebraska* tribute [concert] at the Winter Garden. We talked for a bit, but it still wasn't a real connection. But when Art Baron was playing tuba in the band, he mentioned my name to George Travis, and then I got the call.

So when you came on, what was the original intent there? Guitar? Backup vocals? You've got some great solo vocal turns now, I was wondering if that was always the plan.

Well, it's funny, because when I got the call, I'd never sang backup, never sang harmony before. I did one session with Rickie Lee Jones where she wanted a kind of unique sound... she wanted backup from people who weren't singers; I ended up singing with Colin Hay on a song that never came out. That was the only other time I'd ever really sang backup, except for my own records. So when I got this call, I just got overwhelmed. I thought *that's not really what I do,* and I was kind of nervous about it, but I wanted to meet him again. I really did think I'd do the audition, see Bruce, and then, you know, go home and say, "Wow, I sang background for Springsteen once!"

When I got the call, they asked me to come down there the next day at seven in the morning. I didn't have much time to think about it, I just said "Yeah." But on the way down there I thought, "Well, I could play guitar, too. His songs are pretty simple, I think I could probably play guitar, maybe I'll mention that to him."

So I got down there, and he came in a half-hour later and said, "Hey, it's great to see you. You're probably over-qualified for this, but we're glad to have you." So I was standing on the background riser, asking everybody, "Well, what do I do? What do I sing?" They said, "Simple. The teleprompter will go by, and you sing what is underlined." I said, "What are the notes?" They said, "Aww, you'll figure it out" *[laughs].*

So you were originally standing with the other backup singers.

Right. But then Bruce said, "Hey, man, can I ask you something... do you mind playing a little guitar?" I was like, "Nah, not at all." He said, "You want to stand down here?" And I was like, "Sure!"

So he showed me a song—we probably did eight songs that day—and he said, "Why don't you take a verse on this?" I think it was "Oklahoma Home." And then later that day, just at the end of rehearsal—they'd been rehearsing for a week—he says, "Good week, everybody. We want to welcome Marc Anthony...." And I was like, "Welcome Marc Anthony?"

I had my daughter with me, and she came running at me: "Dad! He said, *'Welcome'!"* I was like, what does that mean?

Bruce said, "Let me walk you to the car." He said, "You ready to roll?" I was like, *I don't know what that means,* you know? He said, "Well, do you want to do this?" I said, "I don't even know what 'this' is!"

And he says, "Ahh, somebody will call you." That was a Wednesday. And I was kind of excited, but I didn't say anything to anybody, because I was still unsure what was going on. Then finally I got the call on Saturday, and I didn't even call the guy back until Monday, because I was still shocked. So we worked it out—then I went to Paris, because I had a gig of my own over there, and I literally flew back from Paris to my first rehearsals. Went straight from the airport to Asbury Park. And boom, that was it.

That's wild. I guess it's not unprecedented in terms of having an established artist on the road with him—Nils Lofgren did it back in the '80s. That was a surprise at the time, too. But it's pretty cool.

Yeah, it *is* pretty cool. Plus, I gotta admit, I didn't know much about Bruce.

Were you a fan at all before?

You know, I got the chance to talk to him a lot. In Asbury Park I really got to know him, because that's when I was learning all the harmonies with him. So before almost every rehearsal or show I'd go backstage, sit in his room, and we'd play songs together—just guitar and vocals. So we talked a lot, too. He told me that he'd taken a trip to the Bahamas right before we started playing, and he took my records with him, and he'd had a chance to listen to them.

I hated to admit I didn't know much about him, but I had to tell him this story. The really weird coincidence is that I'd lived in the Bahamas in 1975. I was living this real paradise life. It was my first time out of the States—I was a teenager, I played saxophone, and I was going to London because a friend had told me there was all this work for American musicians. On my way to London I'd stopped in the Bahamas, and my first week there I got a job in a band. I was making $110 a week, and my rent was only $100 a month. I had this house on the beach. And so I never left—I stayed there for a year and a half.

But after a while—I don't know if you've ever had this feeling: I was in paradise, but I had none of my friends around me to share it with. Even though it's close to the States, it still feels pretty far removed. And all of a sudden I started reading about this guy, Bruce Springsteen. He was on the cover of *Newsweek* and *Time,* and I'd never heard his music, didn't know anything about it. It made me feel so out of touch with everything that was going on in the States, and all my friends were writing letters about all this stuff they were doing... and so I told Bruce that *he* was one of the reasons I left the Bahamas! If I didn't know who this guy is *[laughs],* if I'm this out of touch with what's going on in America, I better go back home!

So I never saw him, but I had friends who kept telling me, "You gotta go see this guy live—forget his records, you gotta see him live." I heard that story over and over and over again, but never saw him, I never owned any of his records. Of course, I *heard* them. I heard songs he did for other people, so I knew he was a cool songwriter, but I wasn't a fan like that. Until we started rehearsing. Then I went back and started listening to his records, and it's just been mind-blowing.

What's hit you hardest?

Well, the *Nebraska* record, I got into that because I had to learn the song for the tribute—which is another weird coincidence, because I did "Johnny 99." I slowed it down to a whisper, almost...

And just a couple of months later, and you're sharing a mic with the guy!

And dueting on that song with him! It's funny, the night I did it at that *Nebraska* tribute, I had a guy with me and we did it as a duet. He played this instrument called an omnichord—and when I got off stage, Patti and Bruce were both asking me about this omnichord. "Who is this guy? Who is this guy? What's his name?" And I thought, "Wow, that guy's gonna get a gig with Bruce Springsteen!" *[laughs]* I remember feeling

really jealous: they didn't even ask about me, they just wanted to know about this stupid little omnichord!

I've been reading your blog, and that's been a lot of fun.

I was surprised to see the link on your site. I had a site meter for a while, so I know my site is frequented by a very small community of people, and I write for them... but I never know who's reading the stuff, you know? I take a lot of poetic license. And when I signed on to this tour, I had to sign a confidentiality agreement that we couldn't write about the tour, we couldn't do interviews, we couldn't do this, that, and the other. So I've been kind of obtuse, intentionally, when I write on my blog about it. I never mention Bruce's name—I don't won't to say anything confessional or anything that would invade his privacy—but it's been unavoidable for me to talk about him, because how often am I on a private jet, eating crab cakes with Bruce Springsteen, you know?

I love that image of you listening to the Replacements on the plane and watching him talk across the way.

It's all true.

Have you gotten feedback from your fan base about what you're doing now? Are people following it—or are you picking up new fans?

Yeah, I get a flurry of emails, I get phone calls. Yeah, I think so. I wish I still had my site meter, because it would be interesting to see how people link back to it. It's been amazing to see at these shows—for instance, two nights ago in Milwaukee of all places, I was walking to the bus and all of a sudden I heard, "Chocolate Genius! Chocolate Genius!" I went over, and there were these women there—definitely not typical Chocolate Genius fans—and they were raving about the blog. This woman was like, "Oh, you're a poet! I want to get all your records now!" So you know, I guess there's gonna be some synergy from it, but it hasn't been overwhelming.

Of course, when we first started playing, we played Jazz Fest for 70,000 people, and I expected to go home and see hundreds of people on my website. But I don't know, I think it takes a little more than that. That's the other thing: it's so much about Bruce. The running joke for me is that you could set your hair on fire on stage—I'll see people soloing, and Bruce is just wiping his forehead and people are going crazy.

Yeah, but to me this tour feels a little different—there's so much fun stuff happening on stage all at once, and that's a lot of the fun of it.

I wish I could see the show. For the first maybe five dates of the tour, I kept seeing these little blinking lights up beside the stage—I didn't even know there were

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

screens up there. You can just barely see them from the side from where we are, and I would see this row of little blinking lights, and I was like, what is going on over there? I actually went out one day and was like, "Oh, *that's* what's going on." I had no idea.

Sometimes I'll wander around the stage—the stage is so wide—just to see what's going on on the other side. I mean, it's just such a different world sonically, just walking around up there. Everybody else is using in-ear monitors, but I can't stand them. So I don't know what's going on—I don't hear everything. From where I am, I can hear the pedal steel, I can hear a little of what Charlie's doing, I can hear the background singers... and of course I can hear Bruce and myself really well. But if you go to the other side of the stage, you've got the drums, the horns, you got Soozie and Sam... there is a lot going on up there.

Has traffic control been an issue?

We've worked it out. I've noticed a really big difference when Patti's not on stage, because she brings a certain modicum of calmness and elegance. When Patti's not on that side of the stage, the testosterone level goes crazy *[laughs]*. And the first time she wasn't there, we were bumping into each other! I noticed the bass player start going crazy, and I was like, hold on a second, what's going on here? Let's take this down a notch. But now we've pretty much gotten it worked out. Everybody kind of knows... it's really good up there, without being choreographed; it's pretty smooth at this point.

You're lucky you don't get bonked in the head by Jeremy throwing that thing around once in a while.

I know. I gotta tell you, the first few nights it was a concern. There were a couple times when I saw that big neck go by me, and I was like, "Dude... we gotta work this out." He's very alert now, and we know each other better now, too, so I can tell the times he's gonna go crazy. So we've worked it out.

What's it like with the band on the road? Is there a lot of camaraderie? Do people do stuff together?

Well, because we're not spring chickens, everyone is very socially aware. It's been a lot less cliquish than I thought it was going to be. I kind of satellite around everything, because I'm just a loner by nature; everybody's got their headphones, everybody's respectful. The horn players, of course, being horn players, they tend to stick with each other. They're old jazz heads, and they're telling stories, and they're talking about this seventh chord over that high this or that. And then Cindy and Curtis have known each other for a long time—they toured with Luther Vandross for years. So they're really tight, and they sit together almost all the time.

Anybody in particular you click with?

I kind of click with everybody. I get along really well with Sam, the Brooklyn kids—me, Sam, Charlie, Larry and Jeremy are the Brooklyn contingent. So we get along well. I really have a good time with Clark Gayton

when he's out on the road with us. I get along well with everybody. They're all really unique in their own way.

It's been fun for me to talk to everybody. You're the last guy. I didn't get to talk to Clark or Curt [Ramm], but otherwise I've gotten to talk to everybody. Until now it's been kind of like speed dating. You know, ten minutes with one person, then ten minutes with another... but everybody seems cool.

Everybody really is. And it's a big testament to the working environment that Bruce creates. After I got the gig and we'd been rehearsing, I was looking for the opportunity to tell him how special this is to me. And I mean, come on, we're in New Orleans, and in front of 70,000 people he not only mentions me, he mentions my record.

We played the Greek Theatre, and Bruce says, "For any record executives out there, this is Chocolate Genius—a great singer." Bruce doesn't have to do that. Here I am looking for the opportunity to tell him how lucky I am to be there, and before I had a chance he's telling me how blessed *he* is that I'm in the band and what a gift it is for me to be there. So this is the kind of environment he creates.

He makes everyone feel great. He's really solid. He's not a moody guy. Every day is exciting, every day we're learning a new song at soundcheck. We learned "Further On (Up the Road)" a few nights ago, and we learned "Long Time Comin'" yesterday at soundcheck. We'd played it maybe eight times, and last night we're doing it.

Yeah, as a fan, I'm spoiled, but as a musician that's got to be pretty unusual.

For a musician of this level—I mean, I have a really good friend who plays with Sade, and those guys, they're so rigid, they wouldn't play a song unless they'd rehearsed it for *four months*. It's all choreographed. For us... a kid had a frog in the front, and we hadn't even played "Froggie Went A Courtin'," I think we played it maybe once in rehearsal. And we pulled that out.

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

There's just a sense of a really large spirit. I think everyone feels it, and it's really contagious. I don't think this is the place where you'd bring bad moods or your troubles. We're staying at great hotels, we're flying on chartered jets, we're being paid very well.... If someone is in a bad mood, I haven't seen it yet.

What's not to like, right?

Exactly. The only thing we've been discussing now is saving a little bit of my money for the post-tour therapy when this depression comes crashing down, after we come back to real life. Bruce and I were talking about it last night, and he goes through the same thing, but... well, he's Bruce all the time. But I mentioned it to him last night and I said, "Man, I don't know what we're gonna do when this thing is over, because this is gonna be hard to leave, my brother."

Your next tour on your own will be a little different, I assume.

Absolutely! You know what, though? I'm really looking forward to it, because I've been learning so much watching him every night. Not only as a songwriter, but just watching him, his rapport with the audience, hearing him talk about this mission. It's been really inspiring to me. I can't wait to carry some of that into my next thing.

So let's talk a little bit about your own thing, your career in general. From 1975 when you were in the Bahamas then coming back to the States... you've been doing this a long time yourself.

Oh, yeah. Which is another reason it's so surprising to be here at this point in my life.

Tell me a little bit about your solo records in the '80s, and then how you wound up in [New York City's] downtown avant-garde scene.

Well, I started playing saxophone. When I was a teenager practicing five hours a day, I thought: This is what I want to do, I want to play saxophone all my life, and I'm gonna get really good. I talked to Bruce about this: I heard Charlie Parker—and some people hear great musicians and get inspired by them, but when I heard Charlie Parker I just put down the saxophone. I was like, I could practice ten hours a day for the next 30 years and I'm never gonna sound like this guy, so I might as well figure out how to *write* a song for a saxophone player *[laughs]*.

So I started writing, and I still played saxophone. I was playing in a band that was signed to Warner Bros. called Code Blue—a power pop band. I had some songs, and someone at Warner Bros. heard them and asked me to do some demos. I'd never been in the studio before, and they gave me a little bit of money. I wasn't expecting to get a deal with Warner Bros., but I figured I'd go to the studio, I'll have a really cool demo, and maybe I can get some more live gigs with it. So I went into the studio for Warner Bros., and a week later they called me and I had a record deal. I never shopped the tape. So I did a couple of records for them, but I got kind of sick of the whole music business on that level—at that point Warner Bros. was the largest record company in the world.

Was this mid- to late-'80s?

Yeah, late-'80s. So, I dropped out of that, and I started making money doing commercials in Los Angeles. I did music for television commercials and jingles. I started getting really good at tennis at the same time. Then I met a guy named Dougie Bowne, who lives in New York and was playing drums in a band. He's played with a lot of people, but when I met him he was playing drums with Ryuichi Sakamoto, and then a new guy named Arto Lindsay. He asked me to join his band as a singer, and I thought, well, I'd never done that before, I'd never been in a band that wasn't mine. I'd never been just a singer in a band. It sounded refreshing. This will be good to have some comaraderie, some collaborators. So I went to New York to check them out, and I just ended up staying. I met the whole downtown scene. I met Marc Ribot, met a ton of people on the New York scene.

And you were friendly with Chris Whitley, too, weren't you?

Yeah, I was really good friends with Chris. I met him because Dougie was in his band—he played on three of Chris's records. I crossed the country with Chris, I toured with Chris.

I was a big fan, and it was such sad news when I heard he passed away.

It hurt a lot of us. Crushed a lot of us—but it wasn't surprising news. Because Chris was probably one of the most gifted but tortured souls I'd ever met. So I was kind of surprised he died like that. I would've expected something more violent, more immediate than an illness. Chris had been ill for a while, but no one knew. With his drug use and his drinking, I was expecting to get a call saying that Chris had OD'd. I was just really surprised. I listen to his music all the time. I was listening to it yesterday, as a matter of fact.

He's somebody who never put out the same record twice, that's for sure.

Probably much to the chagrin of people who made money off of it. And here's coincidence once again. When I was living in Los Angeles, I used to go up to this dog park up in the Hollywood Hills, and I ran into this great drummer named Rick Marotta. He came running into the park one day and

grabbed me, said, "There's this guy Chris Whitley—he's the real deal, you gotta hear him!" I didn't hear Chris's name again until I moved to New York and actually met him. And I remembered at that point that this is that guy Rick was telling me about.

Chris was cool, he was really shy. He'd come to my shows drunk and heckle me *[laughs]*. He was a harsh critic, too. Chris was one of those bipolar guys who was like the shyest guy in the world, giving you a book to read... or he's the drunkest guy in the world, telling you what an asshole you are.

You'd see both sides of that on stage from time to time, too. Sometimes he'd just be this sweet soul up there, and other times he seemed to be pissed off at the audience. Like Van Morrison or whoever, just one of those guys where you never know what you're gonna get.

And you just forgave him because it was Chris. Because when he was on... he was something else, man.

Well, I didn't mean to take us away from going through your trajectory...

Oh, that's all right, man, Chris is a deep part of my trajectory.

So, when did you become Chocolate Genius? How did that come about?

When I came to New York, we had this great band called Hope is a Muscle. It's really a shame we were not as talented businesswise as we were [otherwise], because it was pretty ahead of its time. I'm not saying that in any kind of egotistical way—it's just that we stumbled onto this formula that a lot of people used later. It was really slow, hip-hop stuff—kind of like Portishead—we used real instruments, and I was singing. We made a bunch of music that we never released.

The problem with it was, the two other people in the band were married. Their marriage ended, and the whole energy became really contentious. Dougie, the drummer, went to play with Chris Whitley, and his wife went on to form a band called Cibo Matto that got signed to Warner Bros. And so I was left with all these songs and all this energy in the studio I'd put together in New York. So I started this what-was -meant-to-be-a-joke side project called Chocolate Genius.

I called this woman who had been really interested in the band, and she had a publishing company at that time and she signed me immediately. Then she got asked to A&R V2 in America, so my publishing deal turned into a record deal. So, once again I stumbled on a record deal.

I've never shopped a demo and never asked anybody for a deal. It's really strange, all these records I've made, people have asked me. Like my last record: I met a woman at Sundance—I'd scored a film—and she asked me, "What are you doing?" I said I didn't know, and she asked if I wanted to make another record. I was like, "Okay."

But that's how Chocolate Genius started, it was kind of a side project. When I got the deal and decided to keep the name, the label hated it—and I knew when the label hated it, I was going to keep it.

That's when you knew you were on to something.

If these people hated it, then I must be on to something. That was Chocolate Genius. We made *Black Music*, which were some songs I had for a while. Then we made made *God Music* really rapidly in a cabin upstate. And then the last record *[Black Yankee Rock]*, we kind of did a combination of the two.

And you practically just put that one out—so has this Springsteen thing interfered with your plans in some ways? Like supporting the record?

Not at all. Because I realize I'm not really at a point in my career where I think I'm going to make a record that's going to change my life. Kids get record deals and think, "Oh my God, I got a record deal, now I've got it made!" I make these records because I have to make these records. I can't control what happens after I make them.

This label that I signed with, they had all these great promises about promotions, but I think I was the first record they'd ever made. I got signed to a soundtrack label, which is how I met the woman. She's a music supervisor, and she worked on a film I scored for HBO called *Everyday People*. So when she decided to sign me as an artist, this was her first artist record, and they really didn't know what to do. They had no idea how to promote a record—they just didn't have a clue about anything. So everything I was doing I was doing on my own. I was doing live shows, I was promoting the record. Then the Bruce thing came along, and I was like, do I take this energy to sell the record I have? Or do I take this energy to try and get another deal and make another record? I'll take the latter category and move forward. Much to the chagrin of my label.

You wrote on your blog that the first black faces you saw [at the Bruce shows] were the folks that were coming to clean the venue. I wanted to ask you about that, because it's always been a little baffling: Why aren't there more black fans of Bruce Springsteen? You look at somebody like Prince, who has such a diverse fan base... have you had any more thoughts or impressions about that as the tour has rolled along?

If you come to a Chocolate Genius show, you'd see that unless we played Brooklyn, my audiences are probably 70 to 80 percent white. Which is—I don't know if it's baffling for me, because there was a point when people asked if it bothered me, and I just felt like, man, if you just popped down ten dollars to come to my show, then *you are my people. [Laughs]*. I don't care what color you are, you're in my race right now.

So, I don't know. Black people are funny, man. I do a lot of theater. I do a *lot* of theater, and I did a piece about one of the leaders of the Black Panthers. It was amazing how few black people came to the show. I realized it had nothing to do with the content of it; black people don't necessarily come to the theater.

But on this particular tour, which is all I know—I don't know what other Bruce audiences look like for the E Street Band—but at $90 a ticket? You're not gonna get many black people coming out! *[Laughs]* You know what I'm saying?

For me the only thing that is a little bit ironic about it is that we're doing all these civil rights songs. We're doing "We Shall Overcome" and songs that are a big part of the black struggle. So I would think that the organization might want to reach out to some black people and celebrate it with them. But that's not for me to say.

And in the end I don't know how you really go about doing that anyway. But were those songs part of your experience? How many did you know coming in?

I knew "Eyes On the Prize," of course; "We Shall Overcome," of course. "Jacob's Ladder"? Nahh. "Oklahoma Home"? Nahh. "John Henry" feels funny for me to do sometimes—"John Henry" was banned in a lot of schools. Some of the songs I knew, we're not doing—like "Turn! Turn! Turn!" So they were on my radar, not deep on my radar—but they're on my radar now, I can't get them out of my head!

I bet! I was talking to Sam yesterday, and he brought up something interesting: the idea that he is kind of playing a character on stage.

Yeah, he plays a great character. I like to watch him a lot up there. I call him this *elegant junkie*.

Do you see yourself as playing a character, or are you just yourself up there?

I think another reason that I got this job so easily is because I came in there wearing the clothes I normally wear. Then later, when Bruce started putting this look together, I didn't have a lot of those clothes, you know? It's really funny to wear some of the stuff, like the vest and the whole deal. So when I put on that thing every night, I kind of fall into this character... but I don't know, I guess it's just an extension [of myself]. For instance, this is the first time I've ever stood up and played guitar. In my shows I sit on a stool—there'll be an ashtray, and I'll tell stories and play these solemn songs. I was kind of concerned about that—I'd never strapped on a guitar and stood up.

So for me, it's kind of a new thing. I feel like I'm playing the foil to Bruce, but at the

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

same time I don't want to be crazy animated about it. So I'm kind of learning who my character is... but nah, I don't really go into it with anything like that. Like I say, it's such a trip for me anyway to be standing up, holding a guitar next to Bruce Springsteen!

So who are your influences and inspirations?

You can probably hear them pretty easily on my records. Growing up, I liked everything jazz, mixed in a little Eric Dolphy, mixedin the Charles Mingus when I was growing up.

It was fun to see you mention the Replacements and Stephin Merritt [of the Magnetic Fields] on your blog.

Oh sure. Stephin Merritt I became a big fan of after doing a show with him a few years ago—it was him, Ben Folds, and me. I had never heard of Stephin before then. He'd kind of been an asshole backstage, but then I went out and saw his show and I just begged him to give me a song. Later on I ended up working with him on a theater piece. And I've got all the Magnetic Fields records on my iPod. He's a genius guy.

I loved Roxy Music growing up. I was never a big Led Zeppelin or Beatles fan, but I really liked the Faces. You can see the lineage from the Faces to the Replacements—I like that stuff. I like Keith Richards' solo records.

Just that raw, ragged stuff.

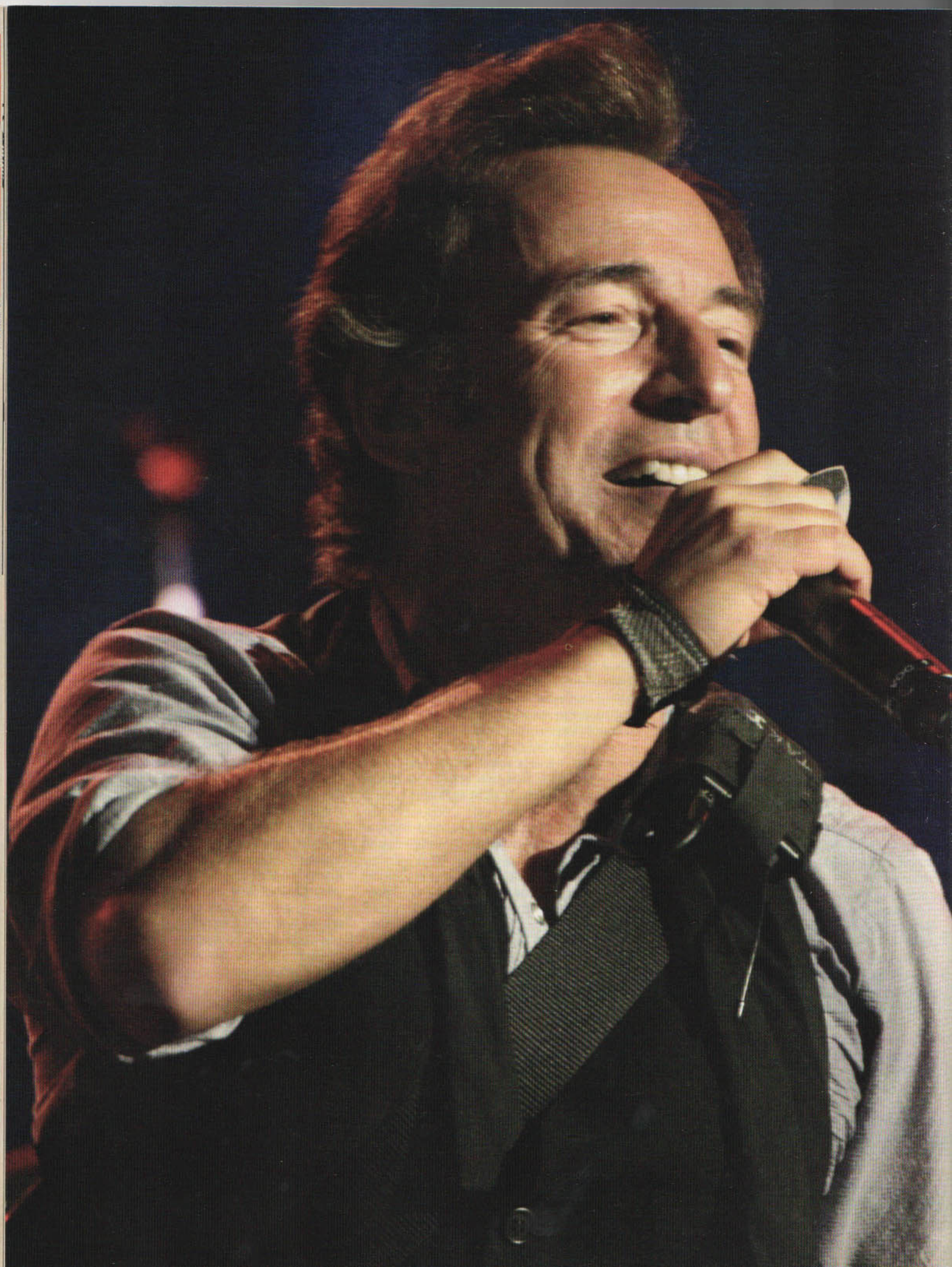
Absolutely. And we're getting to some of that—I really like The Band, too, so I'm really glad we're doing "Rag, Mama, Rag." It's so much fun to play. And Bruce's song we learned yesterday, "Long Time Comin'," really reminds me of a Small Faces song called "Debris." Those first two chord changes—you can sing "Debris" right against it.

And you talked about Bruce as inspirational, now, too—what is it you've found inspiring?

Well, there's something in his music. I've always known that. Of course you know that. You listen to great songs, then pick up a guitar and go, "Wow, how did they put that together?" Paul Westerberg, Dylan or anybody. But actually getting deep into these songs—I mean, really deep into these songs: playing them, singing them, doing the background vocals, asking him what they're about—that's been really inspirational to me as a songwriter.

Also, an initial conversation with him about when he decided that he was a good guitar player, that he knew he could be a great songwriter and he wanted to do something really, really great. That was inspirational to me, because I never really think about why I do it. I always feel like music is this luxury that I'm chained to. Like if you have this amazing couch... but you're handcuffed to it *[laughs]*. Or like you've got the best condo in the world, but there's no door. Music has always been like that to me. I don't have a Plan B, I've never thought of a Plan B, I never thought about being great—I just knew that it *feels* really good. An equivalent is playing the game of tennis. Once you hit a ball on the center of your racket and it has that feeling, it goes zipping down the line, you're hooked to that game forever. I imagine people feel the same thing with golf or whatever gets your art going.

Music has always been like that for me, but I never thought about it. I won't say Bruce is competitive that way, but I think he was really striving for this *excellence*. I don't even know how you can do that in music, it's such a nebulous thing. No matter how big your drive is, everyone's not going to like what you do. So seeing him striving for it and actually *achieving* it, all the rewards it's given him, and yet him still being so genuine.... You know when you meet people who have really found themselves, even if it's the bus driver. Somebody who has just found themselves, they're very aware of who they are and very aware of who you are—it's a wonderful thing to be around. And he's a great dad, seems like a great husband—that's inspirational to me just on a human level. I don't know, maybe he's got hang-ups, and maybe he's gone through these things to the point where he's worked it all out, but to me he just seems like... that's who I want to be when I grow up.



THE GREAT ESCAPE

THE SEEGER SESSIONS TOUR

SHOW BY SHOW FALL 2006

Following a three-month summer break, Bruce Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band reconvened and hit the road again for a second, more extensive swing through Europe. Consisting of 27 concerts in 24 cities, the itinerary included seven nights in Italy and five in Spain, the greatest number of appearances in either country on any Springsteen tour to date. There were also two shows in Germany, one apiece in Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, five in the U.K., and three in the Republic of Ireland. While the majority of the gigs were one-night stands, three consecutive nights in Dublin were filmed and recorded for the *Live in Dublin* DVD/CD package, released seven months later and credited simply to Bruce Springsteen with The Sessions Band. The 17-piece lineup was identical to the one which visited Europe in the spring, with Patti Scialfa leaving after the first four gigs in Italy and returning for the final four in Dublin and Belfast. "She sends her love," Bruce announced in London. "She's tending the home fires. We have three teenagers, and if the home fires aren't tended, they burn the fuckin' house down! We have a division of duties for the moment. I got the easy part!"

Beginning in Bologna, Italy, on October 1, 2006, the tour wound its way through ten countries over the course of the next seven weeks and finally wrapped in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on November 21. It was somehow appropriate that a roadtrip that had officially begun in New Orleans, a city gradually recovering from a devastating natural disaster, should end in a city recovering from a past riddled with destruction of a different kind, brought about by terrorist violence. This brought the grand total of performances to 56, the majority of which (37) took place in Europe, the first time the balance has shifted in this direction on any Springsteen tour. Even with the four Asbury Park rehearsal shows [see *Backstreets* #85] factored into the equation, only 38 percent of the gigs were played on Bruce's home turf. This gave fans on the other side of the pond the opportunity to experience much of the development of the Seeger Sessions tour, from its early stages in May to its finale in November.

The absence of a second series of concerts in North America was the subject of much speculation. Some of the shows on the tour's 18-date U.S. leg in June had been sparsely attended, and few were actually sold out. One could point to any number of reasons: expensive ticket prices, questionable ticket agency selling practices, the apparent unwillingness of Bruce's homeland rock audience to accept any musical activity that did not involve the participation of the E Street Band; it might have been that additional U.S. gigs were not a viable proposition. However, it is also arguable that the concentration on Europe this time around reflects official recognition of Bruce's growing audience in that part of the world and their open-minded attitude toward his various musical projects. During his Stockholm appearance in May, Bruce thanked the crowd for the openness with which they "embrace the new things that we do." Since his first tentative visit in 1975, Bruce has gradually built a large and loyal following in Europe (particularly in the fanatical heartlands of Italy and Spain), and this tour seemed specifically designed with that in mind.

The second European tour of 2006 was notably different from its counterpart in the spring. Although songs from the *We Shall Overcome* album still formed the core of the set, Bruce continually tinkered with both their musical arrangements and the order in which they appeared, ensuring that nothing was ever quite the same from night to night. Since May, there had been a gradual shift in emphasis away from the show's folk music archive concept, allowing more material from the Springsteen back catalog to be worked up and added to the constantly evolving setlists. Several songs that had previously been mainstays took a back seat in Europe or dropped out altogether. "Eyes on the Prize" appeared in half of the shows; "We Shall Overcome," title track and cornerstone of the album, was performed only three times; "Buffalo Gals" was history. While "Johnny 99" turned up on five occasions, "Cadillac Ranch," "Ramrod," "Bring 'Em Home," and "Long Black Veil" were played just once apiece. Bruce's extended introductions that explained the historical origins of songs from the album were also absent, which improved the flow and let the lyrics speak for themselves.

In place of the missing material, the new European shows featured several songs that were debuted on the U.S. tour and now made regular appearances in the set, among them "Atlantic City," "Long Time Comin'," "Further On (Up the Road)," and "American Land." Undoubtedly the most noteworthy new addition, "American Land" gave its name to the expanded version of the *We Shall Overcome* album (released to coincide) and to this final leg of the tour. An original Springsteen compo-

INTRODUCTION BY MIKE SAUNDERS
TOUR REPORTS EDITED BY MAGNUS LAUGLO

sition about the grim realities of immigration across the centuries, given a traditional Irish arrangement and performed with the intensity of the Pogues, it opened the final three concerts on the U.S. tour but came into its own in Europe as the permanent final encore. Following the pattern set by the rest of the album, it was a perfect example of a tale of hardship and adversity set to rousing music. The pairing of "American Land" with the joyous traditional gospel rave-up "This Little Light of Mine" (introduced at this European leg's first gig and played every night thereafter) created a high-energy climax to the concerts, which had previously often ended with the more subdued "When the Saints Go Marching In."

As the European tour progressed, 22 more songs were added to the band's live repertoire, including additional covers and various Springsteen originals. The reggae-tinged "Love of the Common People" was played for seven consecutive shows in Spain and Scandinavia and then dropped from the set, while "Samson and Delilah," "Valerie" (from Patti Scialfa's debut album) and "Shenandoah" (the last track from the new CD to be performed on the road) appeared for one night each. Among the Springsteen selections were several that were featured regularly ("The River," "Growin' Up," "Bobby Jean," "Blinded By the Light"), others that were performed a handful of times ("The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Jesus Was an Only Son," "Fire," "Factory," "All the Way Home," "Land of Hope and Dreams," "For You") and more that were played only once ("The Promised Land," "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?," "Youngstown," "Highway Patrolman," "Mansion on the Hill"). By November, Bruce was including up to 11 of his own compositions per night (half of an average concert), creating a major contrast to the setlists of six months earlier.

Once the Italian and Spanish concerts (which comprised virtually half the leg) were behind them, Bruce and the band traveled north to Scandinavia and beyond. While some observers felt that they got off to a slow start after the long break, they soon hit their stride and were firing on all cylinders

by the time they began the final eight dates in the U.K. and Ireland. Although Dublin was the chosen location for filming and recording (activities which required less talk and more concentration from Bruce, as shown in the official DVD), reports suggest that the band peaked with their performances in London on November 11 and 12.

"For these two gigs Bruce Springsteen turned Wembley Arena into a music hall," wrote Nina Caplan in *London Lite*. "Mostly he and the dozen-plus musicians stuck to tracks from his latest album, but on Saturday he began with one from his own past, 'Blinded By the Light,' the first song from his first album. He bounced around the stage as if his 57 years were a malicious fabrication, skilfully incorporating the fiddles, accordion and tuba into an exhilarating blend of folk and rock and roll. The band played their socks off and had a great time doing it."

"A covers album often indicates artistic flatlining," suggested David Smyth in the *Evening Standard*. "But *We Shall Overcome* manages to sound both timely and fantastic fun. In concert, these songs had the dust blown off them with even greater enthusiasm. The makeover was so thorough that even Bruce originals like 'Atlantic City' were barely recognizable. Fans embraced the new look without reservation. These timelessly rousing songs made dancing obligatory a hundred years ago, and their capabilities are just the same today."

While it was easy to focus on the uplifting tone of the concerts, they also included some serious moments. Although Bruce had dropped his regular criticism of the Bush administration's mishandling of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the results of the recent U.S. mid-term elections inspired him to make a personal State of the Union address during the first Wembley gig. "Some semblance of sanity has returned to the United States," he began. "But damn, it was close. It was more than close. Abraham Lincoln wrote, 'You can fool some of the people all the time, you can fool all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time.' The problem is, you can fool enough of the people enough of the time to make a big tragic fucking mess!" To emphasize his point, Bruce followed these statements with back-to-back versions of "Devils & Dust," "Mrs. McGrath," and "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"

Later in the show, Bruce revealed that he had attended a Lucinda Williams gig at Shepherds Bush Empire the previous night. Having obviously been impressed by the inclusion of several unreleased songs in her set, he decided to premiere one of his own. "Between my whoring and drinking," he explained, "I sit up in the hotel on occasion and I try to write. This is a work in progress." Referring to his earlier comments about the new political mood in his homeland, he continued, "There was so much destruction done to basic principles of democracy that not only is it broken, it needs to be fixed now." The London audience was then treated to the live debut and only tour performance of a major new ballad that Bruce called "Gonna Be a Long Walk Home." Using the metaphor of a boarded-up hometown to represent the erosion of core values and freedoms, the song climaxed with references to rising waters, fire burning out of control, a hurricane on Main Street, and a protagonist with murder in his soul—dramatic images that were not included in the subsequent E Street Band studio version (simply called "Long Walk Home") when it was released on *Magic* ten months later.

Following three memorable shows in Dublin (the first time that a Springsteen tour had included more than one night in the city), the touring ensemble wound up in Belfast, where Bruce announced: "This has been one of the nicest musical experiences of my life." It was unfortunate that the tour had to end at that point, just as things were getting interesting. The sets were continuing to evolve: mainstays "John Henry" and "Old Dan Tucker" had been dropped for the first time in London, and songs were being debuted on a nightly basis, most recently selected from *Nebraska* and *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ*. Along the way, Bruce had resisted the temptation to include any extended preacher-style raps, and there had been few instances of "tour bloat" syndrome (although some considered that "Open All Night"—approaching 11 minutes in Dublin, with both sets of scat singers battling it out at the front of the stage—was a contender). An extra few weeks of concerts would no doubt have brought further developments, but Belfast was the end of the road.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

Kicking off the second European leg with an Italian septet: Bruce and the Sessions Band in Rome, October 10, 2006.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

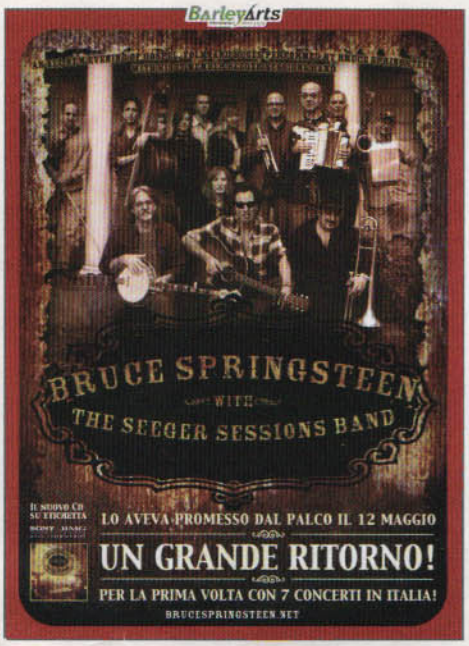
Many fans expressed doubts when the project was announced, but the Seeger Sessions Band converted the majority of them with their irresistibly energetic performances, exceeding all expectations and proving their worth not only as purveyors of traditional folk music, but also as interpreters of Bruce's own songs, whether completely overhauling them or simply adding subtle new textures to the recorded arrangement, often to haunting effect. They were essentially a combination of two major elements with which Bruce had previously augmented the E Street Band (horns and violin), plus gospel-style backing vocals (as featured in his 1992-'93 group) and with the core rock 'n' roll lineup replaced by a more versatile rhythm section. It was also a very democratic outfit, with Bruce taking the role of lead singer and encouraging the others to take the spotlight as often as possible, with horn, violin, accordion and other solos being taken on a regular basis. The majority of the musicians were also vocalists, and many got the chance to sing an individual verse or chorus, notably on the new version of "Further On (Up the Road)."

Although they had to compromise by using amplification and appearing in large venues, they kept the experimental, spontaneous spirit of the original recording sessions alive by working up new arrangements, using acoustic instruments (that could be taken from the stage to a local bar for an impromptu session without being plugged in), and simply having the time of their lives. It was undoubtedly this joyful approach to making music that captured Bruce's imagination when he put together the first version of the band at his farmhouse ten years ago, at the outset of this fascinating adventure.

During his interview with BBC DJ Johnnie Walker backstage at LSO St. Luke's during the first European tour, Bruce revealed that he kept returning to the first session tape of 1997 "because it was a free space, it was a place where I was doing something where I wasn't encumbered by my past, my own writing, or even the fundamental rock 'n' roll band instrumental lineup. It was a place where I was able to step out of everything I'd done and do something completely fresh." Asked if he would make another album with the band, Bruce replied, "Once I started playing acoustically by myself I figured it was something I'd always do from time to time, and I feel the same way about this. I'm amassing my own library. I've delved completely back into a lot of the old folk music. The band is a joy to play with. I look forward to doing it again sometime down the road."

On the subject of fans staying away from his non-electric tours, Bruce was unconcerned. "I sell less tickets. That's just what happens. That's all right, I can understand. People get attached to different parts of you, and sometimes they don't wanna let that go. I love all the different kinds of music I've made, but I wouldn't want to be set down in one place. The only burden on the storyteller is he always has to have a new story. If you're trying to lead your fans on an adventure, you have to constantly be an escape artist. You gotta build a place, and then you have to escape from it and build something else. This may be my greatest escape so far!"

Springsteen is undoubtedly still most associated with rocking out and playing blistering lead guitar, as demonstrated with a vengeance on the current *Magic* tour. But the passage of time has revealed that there are many different musical aspects to Bruce, each of them equally valid and all requiring their turn in the spotlight. Fans who skipped the 2006 shows because they believe Bruce is at his best singing his own songs in full-on electric mode may never be persuaded otherwise, but they deprived themselves of some inspiring performances. Similarly, anyone who dismissed the tour as a strange but soon-to-be-forgotten diversion into an uncharacteristic musical genre was missing the point. The Sessions Band was never strictly a folk group. Capable of playing many styles of music, they showed too much future potential to be categorized as a once-only side project. Those who assumed they would not be as powerful as an electric band only had to listen to this 17-piece acoustic orchestra performing "How Can a Poor Man" to realize that the Sessions players were just as capable of creating a thunderous crescendo as any band Bruce has worked with. It was just a different kind of thunder. As the man himself noted in the *We Shall Overcome* DVD: "It rocks, but it's not rock music." For the foreseeable future, Bruce is on E Street, but it may not be too long before we find him back on the Erie Canal. If his comments on the last few nights of the tour are anything to go by, there's more where this came from. Watch this space.



OCTOBER 1
BOLOGNA, ITA
PALAMALAGUTI

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/The River/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/We Shall Overcome/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: The Seeger Sessions Band rides again, kicking off their 27-night European tour with the first of seven for the loyal Italian fans. Tour debuts of "The River" and "This Little Light of Mine." "American Land," which debuted in June to open the final three shows of the U.S. leg moves, to the show-closing spot.

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Atlantic City," "The River," "Open All Night," "Further On (Up the Road)," "This Little Light of Mine," and "American Land."

LIKE RIDING A BICICLETTA: A great opener for the Italian tour. Despite the extended summer break, Bruce and the band delivered as if they had played together the night before. There was less talking between songs, and no lull before the encore; the show was intense, and everyone onstage seemed happy about being there again. The stunning tour premiere of "The River" got the loudest response of all from the crowd. —*Giorgio Malucelli*

SIDE BY SIDE: I found the audience was a little subdued, at least by Italian standards. "If I Should Fall Behind" was a great highlight. Bruce and Patti traded vocals and verses on this song, each one addressing the verse directly to the other, and the knowing looks they exchanged during the lines "you and I know what this world can do" spoke volumes. The song seemed to have been used as a love declaration between Bruce and the audience in Frankfurt, but tonight Bruce's love was clearly directed at Patti, and the song served as an implicit retort to the ugly break-up rumors from the summer. —*Karin Coberlangen*

UP ANOTHER NOTCH: Maybe it was the newness of "This Little Light of Mine," but the Italians kicked it up another notch, following Springsteen's lead and singing every word. If that wasn't enough, "American Land" truly blew everyone away. At this point, the new version of the album had not been released yet, so must of us had not heard the song. But it was incredible from the opening boom of the drums, and of course "the Italians" line of the song got a loud roar. Awesome show! Maybe just a good show for the Italians, but this American and his girlfriend were more than happy, leaving the Palamalaguti hoarse, sweaty, and exhausted. —*Ken Bramer*

OCTOBER 2
TORINO, ITA
PALAISOZAKI

SETLIST: Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/Further On (Up the Road)/John Henry/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Long Time Comin'/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Rag Mama Rag/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: A 90-minute soundcheck includes "Growin' Up," but Bruce is reportedly unsatisfied with the violin parts at this point.

NOTES: "We Shall Overcome" is dropped, making room for "Further On" and "Long Time Comin'," and will not reappear until Dublin. "Growin' Up" is on the handwritten setlist, replaced during the show by "Long Time Comin'." Fans are deeply divided over the performance levels of the first couple of Italian shows—Bruce has certainly set a very high bar for his Mediterranean performances over the years.

RIGID. REHEARSED REVUE: A revue like this is still a great show, and Bruce will always be the Boss, but the tour has evolved into a tightly coordinated show, which leaves little room for rock 'n' roll spirit. Bruce actually looked out of it at times, even bored, and we all know how his greatness as a live act is tied to his investment in the music throughout the night. In short, I felt there was room for improvement—and to be fair, the shows did get much better over the next few nights.—*Antonio Gramentieri*

ALREADY HOT!: This was no "warming up show" by any stretch of the imagination. It was a fabulous performance, a great setlist, and Bruce in top form and voice. I'm what Italians call a "Zurich Veteran," and I think I know what I'm talking about! —*Jonathan Scott*

OCTOBER 4
UDINE, ITA
VILLA MANIN

SETLIST: O Mary Don't You Weep/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Johnny 99/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Growin' Up/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

Opening on a high in Bologna, October 1, 2006.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

"Samson and Delilah" in Verona, October 5, 2006.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

NOTES: The debut of "Growin' Up" is performed *"i miei fans anziani"* ("for my old fans").

RAUCOUS AND ENTHUSIASTIC: The stunning Villa Manin, a lush agricultural estate from the 1600s which houses a large royal stable, is actually in the village of Passariano, in the hills of *Veneto Friuli*, the upper northeastern region of Italy. Though accustomed to attractive young crowds at the Italian concerts over the years, I was stunned at how unbelievably *gorgeous* this crowd was. Everyone. Beautiful women and handsome men were everywhere in their casually cool raingear. The rain gave way to a clear sunset as we crowded a medieval path leading into the Villa Manin, and the stars popped up in the night sky just in time for the show.

Another big difference about this crowd is that those here seemed not to have followed the tour in the same way that a lot of Italians do. For many of them, this was their one and only Springsteen show of the tour, and perhaps their first in a long time. A cross-section of Eastern Europeans was well-represented here, as this was the closest they would ever get to calling a venue for this tour "local." The crowd was as raucous and as enthusiastic for the Seeger-inspired music as for any of the Springsteen originals. *—Joanie Blum*

ONSTAGE REFRESHMENTS: At one point Bruce addressed the crowd: *"Udine e' famosa per la grappa! Ma la grappa dovee'?"* ("Udine is famous for grappa. But where is the grappa?") Grappa is a popular and strong local drink, distilled from high quality wine, and known for keeping people in the Italian mountains warm through the winter. Then, before an excited crowd, Kevin Buell came onstage with a bottle of the aforementioned drink, and a glass for everyone in the band, to give them all an extra little kick. We in Treviso are happy and proud to have offered our famous drink to our American brother! *—Oliviero Lucato*

OCTOBER 5
VERONA, ITA
ARENA

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Samson and Delilah/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Atlantic City/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Valerie/Bobby Jean/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/Rag Mama Rag/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: *"Romeo and Juliet, Samson and Delilah..."* A wild Verona show brings four tour premieres, including the brilliant pair of "Samson and Delilah" [a.k.a. "If I Had My Way"] and "Fire." Way to pay attention, Bruce. They also debuted "Bobby Jean" (owing its new arrangement to Dylan's "I Want You") and Patti's own "Valerie." While some feel that Bruce may have struggled to get into the groove for the first few Italian shows, the consensus is that tonight he is back on top of his game. The first eight songs of the show are broadcast the following week on Italy's Radio 1.

ROMEO AND JULIET: The ancient Arena in the center of Verona is one of the nicest places to see a concert and is famous for good acoustics. The debut of "Samson and Delilah" had the band members lined up next to Bruce. There was a great deal of percussion, with drummer Larry Eagle on the washboard, and other band members lending a hand with cowbells, wood blocks and shakers. Bruce told the story about Samson and Delilah in Italian, and the gospel-style song itself had a lot of call-and-response between Bruce and the band. It was a nice rendition, and a pity it won't be repeated after this show.

Conversely, "My Oklahoma Home" was weak, with Bruce on autopilot. The flair from the performance of this song in the first leg of the tour is completely gone, and this song now breaks the momentum of the show. Bruce mentioned visiting casa Giulietta in the city center; "This is especially for Verona," he said, as he began "Fire" in the hometown of Romeo and Juliet. *—Jos Westenberg*

SAMSON AND DELILAH: What a great night! "Samson and Delilah" was quite a surprise, sung nearly a cappella with backing from the rhythm section. Patti Scialfa got a lot of the spotlight, as it was her last night for a little while, and she also found her way to the main mic for her own "Valerie." I've always felt that "Valerie" was Patti's best song, and I was delighted to be there for the unique performance.

—Giorgio Malucelli

OCTOBER 7
PERUGIA, ITA
ARENA SANTA GIULIANA

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/Cadillac Ranch/Factory/My Oklahoma Home/Erie Canal/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Bobby Jean/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: "Factory," "All the Way Home," "Leah," "Bobby Jean" and "Growin' Up" get run-throughs in an interesting originals-heavy soundcheck.

NOTES: The tour premiere of a horn-heavy "Factory."

SPRINGSTEEN CLASSIC: Bruce didn't chat that much, but he wasn't at all disconnected, coming down to the end of the stage and sticking his head and hand out to check the weather. "Factory" was wonderful. It had been a bellowed request on the opening night at Bologna, but it was a spectacular surprise to hear the band perform it a week later in a straightforward and utterly effective way. The whole concert had the feeling of being thoroughly connected and united. In its own way, it was as impressive as the May Milan performance. One of those classic Springsteen shows where you leave the show transformed. —*Maggie Baigent*

VENI. VIDI. VICI: Perugia is a little town in the middle of Italy, and Bruce played a small old outdoor soccer stadium. They don't play soccer there anymore, so they didn't even cover the lawn to protect it against the feet of 4,000 Bruce fans—we just stood on the green grass. The show was very relaxed and loose. Cindy Mizelle forgot a line in "This Little Light of Mine"—she seemed mortified, but Bruce smiled at her, patted her on the back, and told her something that made her smile again. He himself had screwed up the beginning of "Bobby Jean," and the band had to start over again.

The crowd in Perugia was simply splendid, and almost all standing, as there were only a few chairs around the edges of the floor. We stood packed tightly, but there was very little pushing or shoving. I felt sheltered and welcome amid all these Italian fans.

I'm not sure which of the Italian shows I preferred. One thing is for sure—Italy got seven shows on this tour because the fans there deserved it. Ceasar said this a long time ago in a very different context, but it could just as easily have applied to Italy as far as Bruce is concerned: *Veni, vidi, vici.* —*Beate Rossbach*

OCTOBER 8 CASERTA, ITA PALAMAGGIO

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Adam Raised a Cain/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Rag Mama Rag/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Buffalo Gals," "All the Way Home," and "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?"

FELLINI-ESQUE: This show was originally booked in a stunning outdoor venue, the Giardini della Reggia, built in 1734—a large and ornate Italian palazzo with expansive, beautiful gardens. At the last minute, this beautiful venue became unavailable and an alternate was hastily booked; I anticipated a dreary venue with lousy acoustics when told it was a local *pallacanestro* (basketball) arena, but that didn't even begin to describe this place. Small, dimly-lit—I felt like we had just walked onto the set of *Hoosiers*, it was that funky and dingy. Of all the places in Italy where there is now a smoking ban, this was the one where it was viewed as merely a suggestion!

The setlist was pretty rote: the standards from the *Seeger Sessions* CD and a nice selection of Springsteen originals, with The Band's "Rag Mama Rag" returning after a few nights' absence. What was a stunner here in Caserta was the initial response of this most different of all the Italian crowds, and the band's ratcheting up *their own* intensity in response, right from the get-go.

This was not your classic Springsteen crowd of multiple-show veterans – this was a group of music enthusiasts who likely had never before seen *Il Boss*. The gaggle of fans near the stage sang and fist-pumped in their usual manner, but the rest of the crowd was like a raucous neighborhood gathering for a local celebration—old men in wheelchairs being escorted by young grandchildren, old women and their middle-aged daughters and sons, with *their* daughters and sons in tow, a motorcycle gang, a few priests, lots of young lovers making out and stomping their feet, and lots of families with young kids and babies. It was a like a casting call for extras for Fellini's *The Clowns*. Nino Rota soundtrack music would have been every bit as appropriate as "John Henry."

Hand-clapping and pogo-ing replaced the usual Italian sing-alongs—which in retrospect I realized did not occur here because most people here in Caserta did not know all the words like everywhere else. The place truly shook, as they stomped their feet on the basketball court and in the wooden bleachers on either side, with hanging stage lights waving back and forth above the floor crowd.

A raucous, thrilling night, as much for watching how this joyful audience responded to an evening of American folk music as it was for hearing the band's most intense rendition of so many songs I had heard live many times already. —*Joanie Blum*

Rome, "the most beautiful city in the world," October 10, 2006.

MAURO REGIS PHOTO

OCTOBER 10 ROME, ITA PALALOTTOMATICA

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/All the Way Home/Long Black Veil/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The River/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down// My City of Ruins/Ramrod/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: Seven nights have been rocked, with Rome the final show of the Italian septet. "All the Way Home" gets its tour premiere.

WHEN IN ROME: Once again Bruce shocked me. Great setlist, great performance, *and* great audience. "All the Way Home," which had been soundchecked in Perugia, made its debut in a stunning version. "Long Black Veil" and "Ramrod" made welcome returns to the set, and "Growin' Up" was played for a seven-year-old boy with a "Growin' Up with Bruce" sign. The sound wasn't its best, but it improved during the show. Bruce called Rome *"la più bella città del mondo"* in Italian ("the most beautiful city in the world"). It was my 26th show, but it felt like my very first. —*Emiliano Stella*

DANIELA ATTARDO PHOTO

MICHELLE HOLME'S HANDPAINTED GUITARS

BY JUDY BUMGARNER

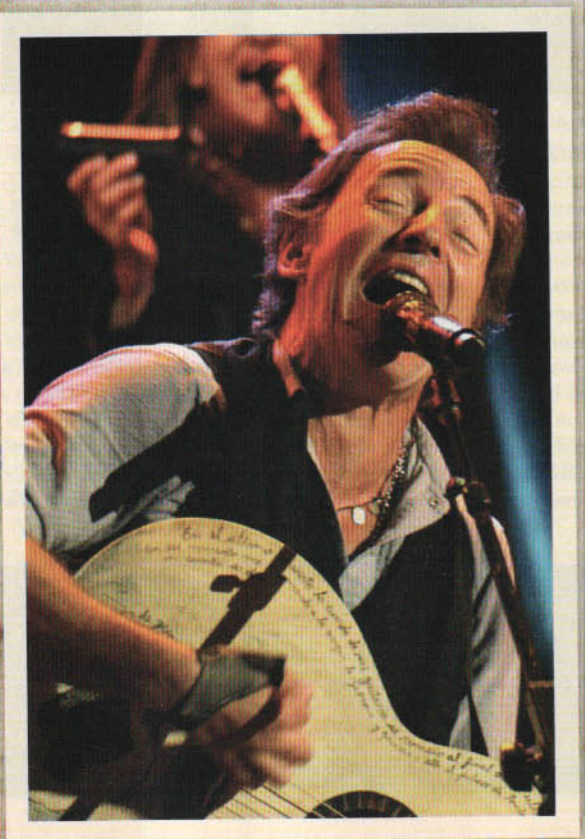
While watching Bruce Springsteen and the Session Band's *Live in Dublin* DVD, atmosphere simply oozes off the screen and surrounds you. It's the music, of course, that instantly captivates and puts you under its timeless spell, but the details of the entire stage scene subtly tightens the grasp that holds you there. From the dimly lit Chinese lanterns to the red, rubber plunger at the end of a trumpet to the grouping of vintage keys added to the drum kit, the minutia creates its own world. And just as Bruce becomes a magnet for attention on any stage, within the shadowy world of *Dublin* details, the handpainted guitars he plays are particularly striking.

Of the numerous guitars seen on the DVD that Springsteen played on the 2006 tour, six of them were commissioned as though they were pieces of art—and they are. Michelle Holme, Art Director and Designer for Sony/BMI, is responsible for their creation.

"Bruce's management contacted me about creating a guitar for the tour that had a Mexican folk art look," says Holme, "something that looked like it was from the turn of the century."

Holme had worked on projects for Bruce since *The Rising*. It was while designing merchandise and the tour book for the *Devils & Dust* tour that the idea of using the Mexican style of folk art first appeared.

"The *Devils & Dust* songs had a lot of Southwest and Mexican influence to them, and that's where we first started experimenting with those references," she says. "For instance, I used an image of a Loteria card [from a Mexican game of chance] on the *Devils & Dust* T-shirts."



MAURO REGIS PHOTO

Springsteen's interest in south-of-the-border art goes even further back. "He collects that kind of folk art and has for a bit," Holme explains. So it didn't seem unusual when she got the request for a guitar design using the same subject matter.

Typically with a CD cover or tour merchandise, an art director roughs out several designs from which the artist and management can choose. Holme took the same approach when it came to presenting ideas for the guitar design.

"I used the computer and roughly laid out six different guitar faces, so he could get an idea of what the finished product would look like," she says. "It's so much quicker to do it this way than to try to actually paint out every design."

Holme was in for a surprise. When Bruce's management presented him with the six designs, he didn't just pick one—he chose all of them! "I'd been talking to Ian Cuttler, a friend of mine and a designer based in Mexico City, about finding a good Mexican folk art painter," she says. "Then management said Bruce liked my rough layouts so much that I should just do the painting. But with six guitars to paint all together, I needed some help," she laughs. "So I asked Ian to do a couple of them with me."

In addition to folk art aesthetic, Holme was directed to base the design on feelings of gratitude for a good journey, of thankfulness for protection on the tour. Because Bruce chose to use each of her designs, all of the guitars project the same theme.

Holme says Bruce was especially involved in the design process with the guitar that features Milagros. "They're little metal icons," she explained. "They're all different with different shapes, but no assigned meaning. You use them to say 'thank you' for something that has happened or for something you want to happen, so it's all very personal."

She gathered an array of Milagros and met with Bruce to get his idea on how they should be arranged on the guitar. "He brought his collection of St. Christophers, and we sat there placing the pieces first here and then there, just trying to get the right look and balance in the design," she says. "He has a real sensibility to what works in art."

Once they were satisfied, Holme took a picture with her cell phone so she could remember the exact layout back at her studio. "It was nerve-wracking working on these guitars... I was worried about affecting the sound, especially with the Milagros," she says. "They're metal pieces, and I didn't want them to be too heavy or to come off!"

After Cuttler and Holme completed the artwork on all six guitars, there was still work to be done. "We had to distress the guitars, because we wanted them to look like they'd been played a million times," she explains. "However, now that he's played them a lot, little pieces of paint are coming off, so some of the distressing that you see now is actually authentic."

The whole experience was a real kick to Holme. "I'd love to do it again! To have my work be a key part of the stage show was great... and it was fun to do a tangible object for a change!"

GUITAR PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHELLE HOLME

OCTOBER 12
HAMBURG, GER
COLOR LINE ARENA

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOLID: Some of the magic of the Seeger Sessions tour seems to have been lost since the Frankfurt show in May. The Hamburg show was solid, but was far from being one of the typical inspirational Bruce Springsteen *experiences*. The highlight of the show came with a song no one expected, "Fire." Bruce was smiling the whole time as they performed this classic. He introduced the song, pointing at a woman in the audience, announcing; "I only played this one thousand times before, but now I'm gonna do this for you darling... a request!" But aside from these words and a "Hello Hamburg!" at the beginning of the show, Bruce didn't talk *at all* to the crowd, and I missed that personal touch. —*Dirk Effing*

OCTOBER 13
ROTTERDAM, NED
AHOY

SETLIST: John Henry/O Mary Don't You Weep/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/Adam Raised a Cain/The River/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Factory/My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: "Factory," by request, opens a six-song encore. The following night, Ed Manion joins his old friends Southside Johnny and the Jukes in Amsterdam for a show at the Paradiso.

DELAYED REACTION: The first part of the show, it seemed as if Bruce was a bit absent-minded, and many of the songs seemed to be played on auto-pilot, as if Springsteen was already thinking of flying home after the show: "Eyes on the Prize" and "My Oklahoma Home" in particular sounded uninspired. This basically lasted until "Jacob's Ladder," when Bruce seemed to draw energy from the crowd and became far more involved in the show. Before "Saints," he thanked the audience for a great night: "Thank you for coming out and participating in our little experiment here." Lisa Lowell sang a verse of "Saints" very well, getting a great response from the crowd.

—*Jos Westenberg*

LEAVE 'EM ON A HIGH NOTE: "American Land" blew all of us out of our seats and was a great show-closer. I don't think I'd ever seen that kind of response from a crowd before, and it was my 27th Springsteen show. Another highlight was the fantastic, emotional rendition of "The River," which in my opinion is far superior to the previous reworked version on the 1999-2000 tour. —*Kris Deckers*

PAOLO DI PIETRO PHOTO

OCTOBER 19
MADRID, ESP
PLAZA DE TOROS LAS VENTAS

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/All the Way Home/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

MERITXELL TORRA JUNYENT PHOTO

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Youngstown." As will be repeated at several European venues, Bruce sits on the edge of the stage for a press conference during the soundcheck, answering questions from local journalists.

THE BIG MUDDY: The show took place in one of the most famous open-air bullfighting rings in Spain. October is one of the wettest months, so an open-air show in the autumn may not have been the best idea. The day and night before the show, it had rained a lot in Madrid, so when the crowd was allowed to go inside, the sandy and muddy soil of the arena had turned into a big mud pool. Bruce brought out his best Spanish, as he welcomed everybody at the beautiful Plaza de Toros, and then added that he hoped they wouldn't throw him to the bulls. *—Jos Westenberg*

BACK IN MADRID: Bruce's first words to the crowd: *"Es maravilloso estar en Madrid otra vez"*—"It's wonderful to be back in Madrid again!" Overall, a good, solid show which the audience loved, but in terms of energy, Bruce and the band weren't quite at their peak. Bruce was a little quiet compared to other, more explosive shows. I particularly enjoyed "Atlantic City" and the newly reworked "Bobby Jean" (a song I'm usually not a fan of). "Eyes on the Prize" featured great vocals by Chocolate Genius. Bruce added some extended instrumental parts to "You Can Look" since the spring, to great effect. One great thing about these fall shows is that, finally, the encores are more than the usual end-of-the-party throwaway. There were some great performances toward the end of the night, capped by a strong finale of "American Land." *—Salvador Trepat*

OCTOBER 21
VALENCIA, ESP
ESTADIO CIUTAT DE VALENCIA

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Johnny 99/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/The River/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Love of the Common People/My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "John Henry," "My Oklahoma Home," "Youngstown," and "Love of the Common People."

NOTES: After a bit of a slow start in Madrid, the Spanish run gets up to speed with Bruce's first-ever performance in Valencia for a crowd

Wrapped in the Catalan flag in Barcelona, October 22, 2006.

of over 25,000 in a soccer stadium. Set highlights include "Growin' Up" and "The River" played back to back, and the surprise debut of the reggae-tinged "Love of the Common People" in the encore. Written in 1967 by Ronnie Wilkins and John Hurley, it was the title track of a Waylon Jennings album that year; it was later a hit for Paul Young and has been also covered by Stiff Little Fingers, Elton John, Indigo Girls, John Denver, and others.

CAN'T GET IT OUT OF MY HEAD: The show started at 10:15 p.m. with fiery versions of "John Henry" and "Old Dan Tucker," followed by an emphatic "Johnny 99." Bruce and the band function as a perfect machine that simply roars for two-and-a-half hours. "Love of the Common People" is one of those great songs I can't get out of my head. *—Tomas Ruiz*

OCTOBER 22
GRANADA, ESP
PLAZA DE TOROS

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Adam Raised a Cain/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Love of the Common People/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The River/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//The Promised Land/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Youngstown."

NOTES: Another high-intensity show features the tour debut of an acoustic "The Promised Land," with Bruce on guitar and harmonica, and Soozie Tyrell and Frank Bruno on backing vocals. Bruce dedicates it to the people of Andalucia. "Love of the Common People" stays in, moving to the main set.

OCTOBER 24
BARCELONA, ESP
PALAU SANT JORDI

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Johnny 99/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Love of the Common People/Growin' Up/Factory/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The River/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Land of Hope and Dreams/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: A lengthy soundcheck before the show includes "John Henry," "Love of the Common People," "Youngstown," "Factory," and several versions of "The Rising" and "Land of Hope and Dreams." The latter is tried in various arrangements with more band backing than the version which will be played in concert.

NOTES: The tour debut of "Land of Hope and Dreams." Springsteen makes a point of speaking in the native language of Catalan, and acknowledging the local fans as *Catalunya*, much to the delight of the local crowd.

LAND OF HOPE AND DREAMS: *"Aquesta cançó és especial per Barcelona"* ("This song is special for Barcelona"). With these words in Catalan, Bruce dedicated the tour premiere of "Land of Hope And Dreams" to the city where he started the '99 Reunion tour and home of the *Live in Barcelona* DVD. As everyone expected, the concert was a party from the beginning. An enthusiastic crowd, a surprised and fantastic band, and Bruce connecting with all of us made for a very inspiring night. The climax came in the second half of the show with people shouting, jumping, and singing, and the band playing at their top level. *"Espero tornar ben aviat!"* ("I hope I'll be back again sooner!") said Bruce, and he added, in English: "You're the best, I'm not kidding."*—Pere Simon*

OCTOBER 25
SANTANDER, ESP
PALACIO DE DEPORTES

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/All the Way Home/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You

Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Love of the Common People/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/Froggie Went A Courtin'

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Youngstown."

Notes: Marty Rifkin's birthday is celebrated by the crowd singing "Happy Birthday" to him in Spanish. After the show, Bruce stays in Santander for a couple of days, resting before his Scandinavian shows, and is reportedly in his usual relaxed European mode, signing autographs for lucky fans.

MESMERIZING: After a delirious, spectacular show in Barcelona, Springsteen finished his Spanish tour with a great performance in Santander, the beautiful northern shore city. The audience took a while to get excited (for many of them, it was probably their first Bruce show). But after "Jacob's Ladder" everything changed, and Bruce brought the audience to ecstasy for the rest of the show. Though "Youngstown" was rehearsed yet again during soundcheck (as it was at every stop in Spain), it was not performed. Instead, Santander got some excellent versions of "The Ghost of Tom Joad" and "Fire," plus a mesmerizing "You Can Look..." with a fantastic new ending. —*Salvador Trepat*

READY TO RUMBLE: I never thought I would ever see Bruce play my hometown, so this concert was really special for me. Bruce proved that every show is "The Show" for him—he did his best, the crowd responded accordingly, and the packed venue (one of the smallest of the tour) rumbled. The band was on full throttle right from the start with "John Henry" and "Old Dan Tucker." "The Ghost of Tom Joad" was a request, with Bruce and cousin Frank sharing the lead vocals, giving me shivers down my spine. I did miss Patti—I thought her vocal parts were one of the highlights of the Barcelona show. According to most of the fans that have attended all the Spanish shows, this was the best by a mile. Bruce thanked the crowd and said goodbye to both Santander and Spain with a bonus "Froggie Went A Courtin'."—*Fran Diaz*

OCTOBER 28 COPENHAGEN, DEN PARKEN

SETLIST: John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Love of the Common People/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

NOTES: A similar set to the previous show in Santander, including "John Henry" to open and "Fire" in the encore, which is fast becoming an audience sing-along favorite. Perhaps because of the Scandinavians' familiarity with English, Bruce speaks more to the audience between songs than he has while touring further south.

TO ALL THE GIRLS: Although the national stadium changed its layout, placing the stage in the center and offering only 20,000 tickets for sale, the stadium was still a very big venue for a Seeger Sessions show. Bruce, however, managed to energize the stadium. "Fire" was dedicated to "all the beautiful Danish women," and Bruce jokingly added that he was beginning to feel a bit like Julio Iglesias. The new version of "Devils & Dust" was beautiful, and "Long Time Comin'" sounded very natural in its new musical guise. Another great show! —*Bo Clausen*

OCTOBER 29 OSLO, NOR SPEKTRUM

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Love of the Common People/Growin' Up/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The River/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/Land of Hope and Dreams/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

Down in front! Taking it to a rapturous crowd in Stockholm, October 30, 2006.

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

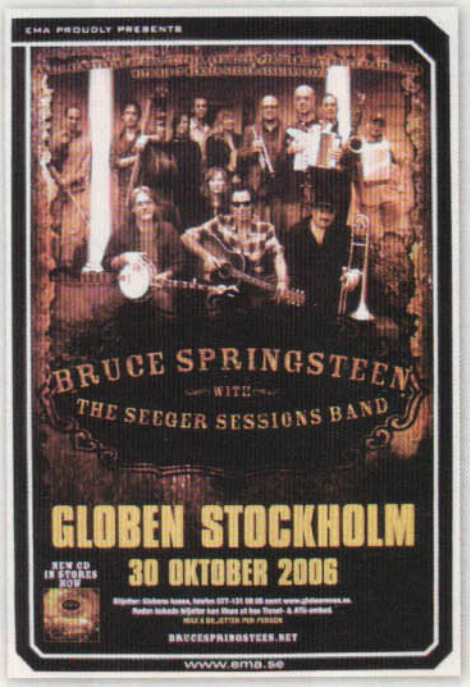
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Jesus Was an Only Son."

NOTES: An equipment truck jackknifes on the way to Oslo, illustrating the challenges of touring Europe in the fall and winter, but damage is minimal and the show goes on. *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* has enjoyed tremendous popularity in Norway, where it has been Bruce's biggest commercial success since *Born In The U.S.A.* Norway, a country of just over 4 million, has accounted for ten percent of worldwide sales of the album. On the setlist but not played: "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

RATHER SEEGER THAN E STREET: The show itself has changed a bit since May. There is less focus on the Seeger songs, and in return we get more Springsteen originals and new cover songs. All of them are worthy additions, but they fall short of improving upon what was already a terrific show. The band and Bruce are tighter and more polished, but there is less of an element of surprise this time around. Things are more rehearsed, and music is no longer being *created* onstage every night. However, there's so much fun on that stage that I don't miss the E Street Band one bit. I'll go as far as to say that at this point, I'd rather have a *Seeger Sessions Vol. 2* than an E Street Band album. This will be a tour I will remember as fondly as 1988. —*Christian Kummernes*

ELECTRIFYING: The Norwegian audience is a stuffy and reserved crowd, so they had to work hard to bring the temperature up. But once they got going it was amazing to see. I've never seen anything like it—not at previous Springsteen concerts, and not for any other performer. One song that stood out above the rest was "Further On (Up the Road)." This is the way this song was meant to be played—a true classic! I'm just desperately hoping that there will be a live album from this tour, or even a concert DVD, that includes it. It was so hauntingly beautiful I'm utterly obsessed with it. The purists complaining that this isn't the E Street Band need to get their heads out of their... well, they need to get their heads out! —*Terje Bless*

BABY, IF YOU WANNA BE WILD: The crowds have been really lame at all other Springsteen shows I've been to in Norway, so I've never experienced anything quite like this before. I mean, you'd expect it from the Italians, who, let's face it, would give Bruce a standing ovation for farting "The Star Spangled Banner." But getting 8,500 Norwegians to go bananas and sing their lungs out at a concert is quite an achievement. Several friends of mine (non-fans) who had watched clips from the show on TV actually called me to tell me that the place looked "wild"! A funny moment occurred when Bruce tried to sprinkle water on the crowd, but the water bottle slipped from his hand and hit a woman in the head. He cringed like a little school boy who had just been naughty and apologized repeatedly to the woman: "In the United States, that would've been the end of my career right there." The man is simply an incredible showman, and it doesn't matter that he's singing silly songs about washing your face in a frying pan, or that Clarence isn't there to dangle his triangle. I walked out of that show feeling every bit as moved, exhausted and rejuvenated as I do when the E Street Band is on stage. I've fallen in love with the guy all over again. Damn him. —*Hild Hoff*



OCTOBER 30 STOCKHOLM, SWE GLOBE ARENA

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/Jesus Was an Only Son/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Love of the Common People/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//The River/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: "Jesus Was an Only Son" gets its first live airing since the last tour. Swedish crowds are always very receptive and enthusiastic, and this—the last of three Scandinavian shows before a week off—is no exception.

A REAL THROAT-GRABBER: The music grabbed you by the throat from the first chords of "Atlantic City," and it kicked you out in the cold with a smile on your face with "American Land." Not having heard "Further On (Up the Road)" played in this way before, I felt that for the first time the lyrics really came through. It was beautiful, as was the less expected premiere of "Jesus was an Only Son." The new version worked really well with the sound of this tour. "The River" hasn't sounded this good since way back. There were many highlights, but it is Bruce's own songs that pack the extra punch. It's nice to hear them done so differently, and he keeps proving how good a songwriter he is since they can be molded to fit pretty much any musical stage. —*Tobias Sonestedt*

NOVEMBER 6 COLOGNE, GER KÖLNARENA

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: Relaxed and full of energy after a tour break, Bruce returns to a sold-out crowd at the biggest arena in Germany. "Growin' Up" is an audible. The inevitable Cologne guest, local rocker Wolfgang Niedecken, joins in for "Pay Me My Money Down."

RIGHT ON THE MONEY: The Cologne show was fabulous, right on the money. The highlights were "The River," "Devils & Dust," "Jacob's Ladder," and the ever-awesome "Open All Night." "The River," in this new Irish traditional incarnation, was overwhelming. He played it with a passion I would not have expected in this song after all these years. The slapstick ending to "Pay Me My Money Down" worked tremendously well with Niedecken joining Bruce for the stage clear out. A lot of fun, a lot of laughs, and an awesome concert. —*Karl Birthistle*

DER WOLF: I've always liked Niedecken's appearances; the Berlin '95 "Hungry Heart" video is one of my favorites. But let's face it, the man always forgets his lyrics when he appears with Bruce, and this time was no exception. One funny thing is that Wolfgang entered the stage and played the song with a broken string; you could see a meter of twisted wire hanging down from the tip of his guitar! —*Eddy Wehbe*

NOVEMBER 7 ANTWERP, BEL SPORTPALEIS

SETLIST: Blinded By the Light/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Jesus Was an Only Son/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Fire/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: The last Continental gig of the Seeger Sessions tour, before Bruce and the band cross the channel for the final eight shows in Great Britain and Ireland. A surprise debut to open: a completely rearranged "Blinded By the Light."

OLD VENUE, GREAT SOUND: The Sportpaleis is the largest arena in Belgium. It was built in 1933, and the main arena has never been modernized. The building is really old-fash-

ioned, with there are no advertisements hanging inside the arena. Once the show started, it became absolutely dark; there were no emergency exit signs, and you couldn't even see your neighbor. It was nice to see Bruce perform in such a noncommercial venue once again. —*Martin Kuklik*

YOUNG AT HEART: As soon as Bruce opened the show, I knew we were in for a great evening. Most of the audience still seemed rather bewildered and remained almost paralyzed in astonishment, but I couldn't help but start dancing to the reworked Cuban-style "Blinded By the Light." What a version—the best I've ever heard of this song. Where in the world does the man get these wild ideas? "Further On" was every bit as enchanting as I expected it to be, again the best version of this song to date, thanks in no small part to the beautiful flute accompaniment and Cindy Mizelle's excellent vocals.

As on other nights when Patti is not around, Bruce added some extra visual effects to "My Oklahoma Home," singling out and pointing to various women in the audience during the "I went to town to pick me up a wife" line. The selected females went nuts, stretching their arms out and screaming, responding even more enthusiastically than Bruce may have expected. His facial expression was truly priceless, as if to say, "Wow, I didn't know they were still that crazy about me at 57!" The audience was on the older side, at least in the pit, where one completely white-haired gentleman, clearly in his 60s, three rows from the stage, danced enthusiastically. It seems like Bruce keeps you young at heart. —*Karin Coberlangen*

NOVEMBER 9
BIRMINGHAM, GBR
NEC ARENA

SETLIST: Blinded By the Light/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Jesus Was an Only Son/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/Froggie Went A Courtin'

NOTES: Nils Lofgren guests on "Pay Me My Money Down," and an impromptu "Froggie" extends the encore to six songs.

HEALS THE SICK!: Marvelous. Majestic. Life affirming. Absolutely fantastic! Just a few of the thoughts from people around me at the NEC Birmingham gig. I would add that I have never seen a happier Bruce, nor a more enthusiastic and sprightly band. Attending one of these gigs should be a remedy, a cure-all, for those feeling blue, low, despondent and depressed, and for those unfortunates who are no longer in love with life. It is joyous and this one began with a real treasure: "Blinded By the Light" has been rendered unrecognizable as a great footstomper of a song. What a way to start the evening. —*Adrian Croston*

BREATHTAKING: Any concerns that covering another artist's material was a sign of having lost some creativity were wiped away in a breathtaking two-and-a-half hours of remarkable music. The most astonishing performances were the re-workings of "Blinded By the Light, "Open All Night," and "Bobby Jean." And it was great to see Nils join Bruce and the band, having seen him solo-acoustic the previous night in a small club in Nottingham, in front of a crowd of less than 200. —*David Griffin*

JOYOUS: The only word to describe the event is *joyous*. I haven't sung so many gospel songs since I went to church school, and the sight of 13,000-plus people singing and dancing to "Froggie" was truly surreal. —*Dave Jones*

NOVEMBER 11
LONDON, GBR
WEMBLEY ARENA

SETLIST: Blinded By the Light/Old Dan Tucker/Atlantic City/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Jesus Was an Only Son/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Long Walk Home/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/Froggie Went A Courtin'

NOTES: The Seeger Sessions Band pulls into London firing on all cylinders, ratcheting up the political overtones in the wake of the recent U.S. midterm elections. In a rare move, "John Henry" is left out of the set (as it will be on *Live in Dublin*), but Bruce makes up for it with the live premiere of a brand new song, "Long Walk Home." He tells the crowd he was inspired the night before, after guesting with Lucinda Williams at Shepherds Bush Empire.

FOOL IF YOU THINK IT'S OVER: There were some neat political sideswipes, with Bruce paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln: "You can fool all the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all the time; but you can't fool all the people all the time...But you can fool enough of the people enough of the time to make a tragic fucking mess of it all!" He then spoke about the war in Iraq (it's a pity he didn't mention Tony Blair, too) before an ever powerful "Devils & Dust." "Bring 'Em Home" would have been a nice touch for us Brits, as we've got troops in Iraq as well, but it wasn't to be. —*Chris Zarzecki*

LONG WALK HOME: For the setlist watchers, the night had proceeded fairly uneventfully during the main set, but all that changed with the encore. Bruce ambled to the microphone and talked about the destruction of the basic principles of democracy and introduced "a work in progress." We were then treated to the world premiere of what Bruce introduced as "Gonna Be a Long Walk Home," a beautiful, elegiac ballad. —*Nick Mays*

NOVEMBER 12
LONDON, GBR
WEMBLEY ARENA

SETLIST: Blinded By the Light/Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/John Henry/Johnny 99/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/The River/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Land of Hope and Dreams/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/Man on the Flying Trapeze

NOTES: The tour debut of "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?" makes for a generous 11 Springsteen songs in the set. Springsteen introduces a rare performance of "Man on the Flying Trapeze" with a bit of musical history (including the origin of the leotard) and announces to the crowd, "An epic story, and tragic, too. Feel free to bust out and sing along—that's what folk music is all about!" 12-year-old Christopher Hagen (son of BBC's Mark Hagen) attends his first Springsteen show, and gets to chase Art Baron off the stage at the end of "Pay Me."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Sting and Trudie Styler

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: I saw the show at the MEN in Manchester in May. Whilst the experience of seeing Bruce live with or without any band was good as ever, in hindsight that show was very much a "work in progress." Here we are, six months, 50-odd shows later, and what I saw last night was a staggeringly different night out. The additional number of original Bruce tunes (I mean, where did he drag "Does This Bus Stop..." from?), the tightness of the band, the arrangements themselves, and the decision to cut down on lengthy spoken explanations before the songs all made Wembley a real night to remember. We still got Bruce telling the stories, the jokes, and the funny asides, but the show really flowed like the supremely built and well-oiled folk machine that I believe Bruce intended it to be. —*Dave Hawkins*

NOVEMBER 14
SHEFFIELD, GBR
HALLAM FM ARENA

SETLIST: Blinded By the Light/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Adam Raised a Cain/The River/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Youngstown/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Atlantic City/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Growin' Up/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Bring 'Em Home/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/Froggie Went A Courtin'

NOTES: The final Seeger Sessions show in England gets the location-appropriate and

Birmingham, November 9, 2006.

much anticipated tour debut of "Youngstown," which has been soundchecked extensively.

YOUR HOMETOWN: As someone who works in the steel industry just outside Sheffield, I was thrilled with his dedication of "Youngstown." One of the few remaining major steel plants in Sheffield closed down this year, which perhaps added extra poignancy. "I guess they don't make that much steel here anymore," Bruce told the crowd, "then again, they don't make much in Youngstown anymore, either." It's my favorite track on *Joad*, and a song I've always wanted to hear him play live in Sheffield one day, but hadn't even considered it would happen this time around, so it was a lovely surprise. A beautiful version too, with Cousin Frank sharing verses. —*Sally Parker*

POWERFUL AND TENDER: "The River" was unexpected and superb, and "Youngstown" was powerful, but nothing matched "Devils & Dust" for emotion. Grown men had tears down their cheeks as he sang this remarkable song, and the band rendition knocks the spots off the acoustic version. Bruce sounded like "The Killer" on the triumphant "Open All Night," and on songs like "Pay Me" and "Jacob's Ladder" it was more of a soul revue than folk show. At one point I turned to a friend and said, "It's like watching Chuck Berry!" Best of all was hearing Bruce sing "Bring 'Em Home." Only two days ago a young Royal Marine from our county was killed in Iraq, and many of us in the U.K. believe our country is fighting a pointless war. —*David Griffin*

GEOFF ROBINSON PHOTOS

NOVEMBER 17 DUBLIN, IRL THE POINT DEPOT

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Growin' Up/If I Should Fall Behind/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/Devils & Dust/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Blinded By the Light/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

NOTES: The first night of the only three-night stand of the tour. Patti returns for her first show since October 5 in Verona. "If I Should Fall Behind" ccomes back with her, and "Open All Night" grows to epic proportions, with scatting from the Seeger Sessions Band's ladies and gentlemen alike. All three nights of the Dublin stand are captured for the *Bruce Springsteen with the Sessions Band—Live in Dublin* live album and DVD. Cameras are numerous, but unobtrusive.

SCAT WAR!: "Long Time Comin'" was dedicated to Bruce's children. He looked off to stage right, asking where they were, then, with an air of slight disappointment and concern he looked at us and exclaimed: "No, really! Where are they? Maybe they're in the pub, drinking their third pint of Guinness!"

"Open All Night" was probably the longest version of the tour, with scat upon dueling scat, clocking in at well over 12 minutes, and not a second too long. It was fabulous fun, and the whole band clearly loved the playful elements of the song. We left the arena exhilarated and hungry for more. —*Karl Birthistle*

LIVE IN DUBLIN BACKSTREETS READERS RESPOND

WHEN FIRST ANNOUNCED, I THOUGHT THE IDEA of the *Sessions* album to be a little self-indulgent, but like many, I was taken by how joyous and natural the whole album was. It is now firmly among my all time favorite albums, period.

But it was in the live setting that the songs really took on a life of their own, and the Sessions band proved to be one of the tightest units I have ever seen. *Live in Dublin* is not just a souvenir of the tour but a fine testament to the power of superb music played with vitality by a group of musicians who are having as much fun as the audience. If there was ever a place to play the Seeger Sessions music, then it was Dublin—and if you were there, thank you for adding to a great event.

To be critical, I have to say that "Love of the Common People" doesn't work. Not only doesn't it flow with the rest of the material, it's not the strongest song ever written, and the new arrangement really doesn't add anything. Particularly since it's the one song here not actually performed in Dublin, its addition is pretty pointless.

So, this is a terrific album documenting a surprisingly successful phase in Springsteen's career. It's not perfect... but damn close. *—Dave Jones*

SPRINGSTEEN'S LAST TWO LIVE RELEASES *(Dublin* and *Hammersmith Odeon)* show him excelling at what none of his other official releases have: a musical genius simply "letting go." For Bruce, as much as I love and revere him, it's always been control, control, control. Here, in Dublin, he lets the players play and the horns blow. Pure energy, pure fun. Sure, we can bitch about some track selection, but the energy and pure joy Bruce and the band emit, and the re-invented classics such as "Blinded by the Light" and "Open All Night," make this DVD, in no uncertain terms, a Top Five in my Springsteen collection. I say, let the Sessions Band continue to evolve, right alongside Little Steven et al., and we'll see that rock 'n' roll future is, once again, Mr. Bruce Springsteen. *—Mark White*

LOVE THE MUSIC. *HATE* THE VIDEO. I'VE LISTENED to the CD 20 times since purchasing it—the music is magic. Many highlights, but my favorite has got to be "Further On (Up the Road)." Bruce is probably the only artist who would completely take great music and rearrange it, flip it on its head, and come up with something that is new, fresh and exciting. "Further" is just one example of that—"Growin' Up" is another.

The video on the other hand—*arrgh!!* As previous commentators have opined, the number of cuts and camera angle changes ruins the viewing experience. While most of the criticism seems to be aimed at the director or the editor, doesn't Bruce have final veto power? One would think so. The CD is another Bruce classic that gets a 9. The video scores a 3. *—Neal Friedlander*

AFTER WATCHING *LIVE IN DUBLIN*, I AM AGAIN blown away by Bruce and the Sessions band—or the Band Formerly Known as the Seeger Sessions Band. And every time I watch it, I appreciate it more. I was amazed at how "Atlantic City" takes on a whole new meaning with the new arrangement; "Open All Night" is another major highlight. Throughout, Bruce is clearly enjoying himself, which carries over to the band. He doesn't overdo his performance, as he tended to on previous concert DVDs with the E Street Band *(Live in New York City* in particular). This is just a performer and a band firing on all cylinders—I find myself wishing he'd write new material for them and keep this whole project going.

I am jealous of the crowd in Dublin, as they had a full house for the shows, while so many U.S. cities did not reach capacity, partly because of poor marketing. Fans will be kicking themselves years from now when they realize what they missed. But they can capture some of the magic with *Live in Dublin,* which truly shows an artist willing to experiment and add new life to old songs providing a rich and rewarding experience for those who want to go for a ride. *—Doug Willard*

LIVE IN DUBLIN
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
WITH THE SESSIONS BAND
RELEASED JUNE 4TH
DOUBLE CD, DVD AND DELUXE PACKAGE FEATURING DOUBLE CD / DVD
INCLUDES FAN FAVOURITES FROM 'THE SEEGER SESSIONS', INTERPRETATIONS FROM THE SPRINGSTEEN SONGBOOK AND RARE SONGS APPEARING FOR THE FIRST TIME.
BRUCESPRINGSTEEN.NET COLUMBIA.CO.UK

GREAT MUSIC AND PERFORMANCES, BUT ONE question: Who turned out the lights?! With the level of recording equipment available to the team behind a superstar like Bruce, the video quality doesn't come anywhere near what is possible, but the dim lighting is what stands out the most. Maybe Bruce wanted the lighting to complement the show, and damned be the fact that the shows were being filmed. His prerogative, I guess. I sure would like the next one to emulate the quality of *Live in New York City,* though. *—Stewart Glick*

ONE OF THE GREATEST, IF NOT THE GREATEST, musical performances I have ever seen in my life. But the lighting on the DVD sucks!

—Bob Orenburg

AS ONE WHO WAS CITED COMPLAINING ABOUT the "claustrophobic feel" of the DVD previews caught on PBS and choppy editing that "sucks the life out of what was a vibrant, buoyant, spacious stage show," my first reaction to the actual product was: Man, it ain't that bad at all. Watching in the intended sequence and as a whole, the editing seemed to become less intrusive, with more variety and even some long shots that capture the band's flavor more effectively than I'd initially thought. The editing has moments such as in "We Shall Overcome" where it follows the music deftly, rolling past a vocal part, percussion shake, and then syncopated drumming that you often let fade into the background while listening to the song. It ends with an upward-looking shot of the singers around Bruce's mic, and Bruce nailing the ending to great effect.

Conversely, the essence of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" has not been captured, too tightly focused on what was a particularly rousing call to arms each night. Not only too much of the now-standard Bruce close-ups, which are far too legion in this film in general, but even of the band as a whole. We only get one longer shot of the stage—it was just so much fuller than what gets represented here. The crowd and some longer shots get more time during the encore section of the disc. And while I think crowd shots suck in general (see R.E.M.'s *Perfect Square* DVD for a sampling), capturing some more of the movement and energy from the crowd might have added to this experience.

But the great musical versions of both folk standards and Springsteeen material is really what makes this package a worthwhile document of the Sessions tour. Sure, the lighting can be questionable at times, and Bruce's voice is not in best form—and heck, the show I saw at the PNC Arts Center in New Jersey may have had a little more energy (where were the scissor kicks from Bardfeld?)—but the music still impresses. And Bruce walks the walk he has long walked in a big way with the Sessions crew, sharing the mic with black and white men and women, giving space to the various players, and even pushing banjoist Greg Liszt out into the spotlight for his turn on "My Oklahoma Home."

—Bill Kenney

WE MISSED OUT ON *TRACKS 2* FOR THIS?!

—Matt Ditchey

I LIVE IN GERMANY, AND THE BLU-RAY DISC HAS been delayed in Europe, but I've watched the standard DVD three times already. It is the best concert release ever, and the finest music ever performed. Of course, I am a big Bruce Springsteen fan and I loved the Seeger Sessions tour, but even my friends who are totally not into Bruce got goosebumps; they agreed that this is the finest music ever played and that the DVD offers the best sound quality we ever experienced. Everyone I know is going to buy the DVD, and they want to see it over at my place again once I get my hands on the Blu-ray disc.

The picture is not as clear as on *Barcelona* or *New York City,* and it is way too dark. Many songs are cut, and the audience's singing is not well integrated in the mix—the audiences at these shows sang their hearts out and you can hardly hear it on the DVD, only on some passages. Still, the greatest performance ever—something totally different, something never heard before—has been captured on disc with phenomenal sound.

—Oliver Krings

AT A STAGE IN HIS CAREER WHEN HE COULD EASILY take no risks and simply please the wider public (not to mention his label), Bruce is to be admired for having the courage to do the unexpected. The reworkings of his own songs are astounding, not just because they're good, but for the imagination required to alter them so radically. My only quibble is the omission of "John Henry"—but I'm not sure what could have been left out in order for it to be included. Two things which some have grumbled about, the MTV editing and the darkness of the DVD, both seem fine to me, no better or worse than any of his previous releases. And hooray for the return of proper mixing of a live recording! I think the Sessions tour has been a triumph, a tour de force which the *Dublin* release captures very well, and a tour which will grow in legendary status as time goes by. —*Colin Kennedy*

WHILE I'M GLAD TO HAVE THE *DUBLIN* RELEASE, I feel somewhat unfulfilled. The recording just doesn't capture for me what I saw live: the blinding ensemble brilliance and sheer exuberant joy of Sheffield (the gig that immediately preceded the Dublin performances), or the earnest charm of Manchester (earlier in the tour, as Bruce coaxed a brilliant evening out of an obviously nervous and still developing band of outstanding individual musicians). On occasions Bruce looks tired, not helped by the dingy lighting. He seems to be pushing for the energy that flowed entirely without prompting in Sheffield. Also, the band is really much, much hotter than this recording suggests. The song selection lacks the surprise, stunning choral version of "The River" and, mystifyingly, my personal favorite tall tale, "John Henry."

I can't help thinking this would have worked better if it had the continuity of a single performance rather than a mix-and-match of three, and that might be the reason for the apparently variable energy levels. Having been completely blown away by my Sheffield experience, I feel a little sorry for fans who missed the later live performances, to which *Dublin* really does not do justice. —*Martin Smith*

THE BIGGEST OVERSIGHT OF THE DVD WAS THAT LaBamba and Mark Pender were not there on the nights that were filmed. When I saw the tour in Des Moines, those two were among the most entertaining and memorable parts of the evening.

—*Brian Dieffenderfer*

THIS RANKS UP THERE ALONG WITH ANYTHING Bruce has ever done, solo or with the E Street Band. It's funny; I thought after buying *Devils & Dust* and *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* (both versions!) that Bruce was losing something off his fastball. I missed the lone Boston-area show with the Sessions Band due to a schedule conflict, and after watching the Dublin show, I'm kicking myself! This show had everything: part hootenanny, part religious revival, part Dixieland review, you name it, there was something in there for everyone. He thanks the band in the liner notes for "Giving me one of the great musical experiences of my work life," and boy, does it show.

Although it's damn near impossible to single anyone out from such a talented group, Cindy Mizelle on "This Little Light of Mine" was almost a religious experience, and Curtis King on "Love of the Common People" (great to hear this '60s gem!) was a showstopper. I was expecting a full-band Dixie-style romp on "When the Saints Go Marching In," and was treated to a tender, gentle, moving version instead.

It takes performances like this to shake us all out of our collective doldrums, and show all that there are different forms of music inherent to our experience that need to be heard! So thanks, Bruce, for reminding me of what of what I'd forgotten, and giving me what I needed, when I needed it.

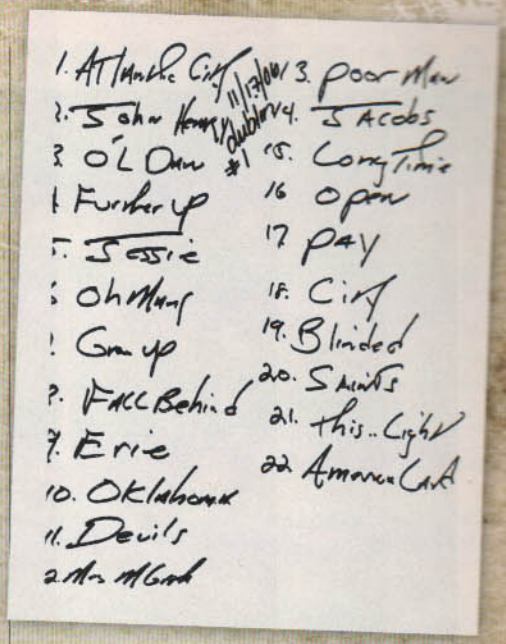
—*Bill Curtis*

DON'T GET ME WRONG—WHEN I RACED TO THE store and bought the double CD, I was super excited to hear Bruce and the Seeger Sessions Band wail away. Boy was I disappointed. No, I was not expecting it to sound like 1978 all over again—I expected it to sound like the amazing shows this band performed. The BBC radio special, the sloppy-yet-exuberant Jazz Fest debut, or any number of great clips featured on AOL nightly through the American leg of the tour. Instead, we get an end-of-tour clearly burned out Bruce (listen to the vocals on "Long Time Comin'," he half talks it!) barely going through the motions. "Poor Man" is a weak, half-hearted version. The sound is muddy and the band still pumps away, but it seems they can't muster 100 percent with the Boss not into it. Hey, it happens to every artist at some tours' end... just don't release those shows! —*Dave Casale*

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN DOING THE FOLK THING was pure fun, for sure, but I must say that the best number of the whole live album is his own song "Highway Patrolman." Springsteen live, as we know and love him: a storyteller in perfect rock 'n' roll harmony. —*Ulrich Hofmair*

LIVE IN DUBLIN IS OUTSTANDING—IT CERTAINLY puts the studio version of *Seeger Sessions* to shame. I am glad he brought it out on DVD, so that all those who poked fun at Bruce—calling this "Wagon Train" or "Country Bear Jamboree"—could see just what a great time they missed not seeing this show. Live, it far surpassed anything he did with the E Street Band since 1985, and to see the love and joy Bruce brought to this project, how can you not love it? It's also incredible to see how the show evolved since earlier in the year.

The hidden surprise—a loose and casual Bruce playing and singing "Cadillac Ranch" offstage—what better way to end the DVD? I'm just sorry he didn't include the live version, too. —*Fran Petito*



I'M USUALLY THE LAST PERSON TO NOTICE THESE things... but how about Bruce's guitar magically changing back and forth on "If I Should Fall Behind?" It goes from brown to yellow and back again. I wasn't watching that carefully at first, but then I thought, what, did he grab a different guitar partway through? Then near the end it changes back and forth really fast from shot to shot. On Van Halen's *Right Here Right Now* DVD, their *clothes* change back and forth during the songs—it's become notorious among VH fans. At least this was not that blatant. —*Matt Brown*

WHAT AN EXCEPTIONAL DOCUMENT THIS IS, suitably capturing a most extraordinary period in Bruce's career. I'd read so many negatives online about the editing, I really had set my expectations low. But it is just superb; I find it very deeply moving—not because it was filmed here in Dublin, but because the songs, the band, the performance, are just beyond compare. How lucky we were to experience this, a truly great moment in a wonderful career. My God, when that brass section lets rip, I have never seen anything like it. Where does this stand in comparison to *Live in NYC* and *Barcelona*? Right now, top of the heap, I say. Time will tell—I am just a little excited about it at present!

—*Kevin Kinsella*

CAN WE PLEASE BE HONEST? DOES *ANYBODY* give a crap about this Seeger Sessions stuff? For the first time in my 23 years as an official Bruce Tramp, I have absolutely no interest in a new release. This live set will sell about as well as a new Slim Whitman release. And they are having a showing of this in movie theaters around the country? Are you kidding me? The popcorn vendor will be the only one watching. Am I the only one who feels this way?

—*Dave Iannuzzi*

GEOFF ROBINSON PHOTO

Master shot: Dublin, November 18, 2006.

Thursday, November 17 – Sunday, November 19, 2006

Portions of tonight's show are being videotaped, filmed and recorded. By entering, you are agreeing that your likeness can be used for any purpose by Thrill Hill Productions.

TUBA SOLO!: The version of "Pay Me" was hysterical, with Art Baron's tuba solo going on uninterrupted for so long that he started looking around behind him for Bruce (who had in fact gone for a lie down on the piano). Bruce never appeared to haul him off the stage, so Art eventually shrugged and trudged off on his own. Bruce "woke up" and came back center stage. The crowd kept singing the "Pay Me" chorus for so long that he gave up and went back to "sleep" again on the piano. Eventually, he had to conduct the song to an end so that he could start the encores. It was very funny—I hope it makes it into the DVD! —*Sally Parker*

NOVEMBER 18 DUBLIN, IRL THE POINT DEPOT

SETLIST: Old Dan Tucker/John Henry/Johnny 99/Eyes on the Prize/Jesse James/O Mary Don't You Weep/Bobby Jean/If I Should Fall Behind/My Oklahoma Home/Highway Patrolman/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//Shenandoah/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Shenandoah," "If I Should Fall Behind," and "We Shall Overcome."

NOTES: Two tour premieres, both highlighted by beautiful vocal contributions from the band: "Highway Patrolman" and "Shenandoah." The latter is also a world premiere, the last from the *We Shall Overcome* album to be performed live. "Open All Night" is a little shorter than on the previous night, and "Bobby Jean" is dedicated to the faithful fans that have been traveling to see these shows, with a little good-natured ribbing as well: "Doesn't your family miss you? Don't your co-workers wonder where you've gone? They must!"

HOLY WATER: Saturday night was equally lively as Friday, although the tour premieres were slower songs and thus tended to break the pace a little. I got the sense that they were making sure they got versions of alternate songs for the DVD. Bruce's minimal chat with the audience was noticeable, although he did dedicate "Shenandoah" to Elizabeth, an English fan who was badly injured by a car while waiting in line for the recent Rome show, and her daughter Clare; he tenderly wished for a speedy recovery. Bruce also passed a cup of his water into the crowd at one point, for someone who fainted down at the front. —*Sally Parker*

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: When the band came on stage for "Old Dan Tucker," the crowd caught on to the song before Bruce started singing—a great concert moment. In the same vein, the crowd kept "If I Should Fall Behind" going after the band had stopped playing. We were also treated to a great version of "Highway Patrolman." This is where I would have preferred the crowd to be quieter, but I guess there are always two sides to everything.

—*Brigitte Tersek*

NOVEMBER 19 DUBLIN, IRL THE POINT DEPOT

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/The Ghost of Tom Joad/O Mary Don't You Weep/Jesse James/Further On (Up the Road)/Erie Canal/For You/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/Long Time Comin'/Jesus Was an Only Son/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//We Shall Overcome/Blinded By the Light/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land

SOUNDCHECK: Sunday is a day of blistering wind and rain, and ticket-holders are let in early to get out of the cold—just in time to catch "Mansion on the Hill," a short "John Henry," and "For You."

NOTES: Inside, Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band heat things up for arguably the best of the three nights at The Point. "For You" is played for the first time on the tour, and with the bulk of the live recording behind him, Springsteen seems more relaxed. The encore opens with "We Shall Overcome," not played since the very beginning of this leg.

BACK AGAIN SOON: "For You" was dedicated to the fans who had been "braving the elements." He goofed around for a while, declaring "Here we go" probably four times before starting the song, which was quite funny, but the song itself was stunning. "Long Time Comin'" (which was played slower than it had been on Friday) was dedicated "to my fabulous son," and Bruce sang certain lines of the song directly to him, which was really nice to watch. "Jesus Was an Only Son" was a natural follow-up, with Bruce talking about how children have their own destiny, and will go out and do their own thing and have their own lives. At the end of the show, Bruce thanked the audience for the three nights in Dublin, and said he was hoping to return again soon, only to get a humorous shouted response from someone in the crowd: "Come back on Wednesday!"—*Brigitte Tersek*

THE PERFECT FORMULA: The stage was beautiful. The lighting looked like a pearl necklace of lights above the stage. As a matter of fact, the whole stage looked like a 48-foot TV, except it had everything the TV doesn't have: great music, an unambiguous message that it is okay to dream, audience participation, variation, and the element of surprise. The last of these manifested itself in the tour premiere of "For You," played to compensate for the fearsome weather outside. As a matter of fact, I think Bruce has finally found the show he was always looking for. He has *great* singers (as in '92-'93, except now they get used properly); he has a horn section (as in '76-'77 and '88); and he has songs that twist and turn with numerous false endings (as in '73). He has a bunch of songs that are as American as the soil, all the bar band moves he has worked out over the years, and his own lyrics, which far surpass those of any of the songs he has borrowed. I wonder if he is trying to challenge himself for the next E Street Band tour, because it will be difficult for him to top the tour he has just pulled off. —*Robert Barany*

RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

Waitin' on a tuba player.

NOVEMBER 21
BELFAST, NIR
THE ODYSSEY

SETLIST: Atlantic City/John Henry/Old Dan Tucker/Eyes on the Prize/O Mary Don't You Weep/Jesse James/For You/Mansion on the Hill/Erie Canal/My Oklahoma Home/If I Should Fall Behind/Mrs. McGrath/How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?/Jacob's Ladder/The River/Open All Night/Pay Me My Money Down//My City of Ruins/Blinded By the Light/When the Saints Go Marching In/This Little Light of Mine/American Land/We Shall Overcome

NOTES: Like the *Devils & Dust* tour-closer almost exactly one year ago, the final show of the 2006 tour is a family affair. Evan and Sam Springsteen take the stage to introduce the show and are back to close the main set—along with sister Jessie, friends, and a nanny—adding vocals on "Pay Me." Set highlights include the tour premiere of "Mansion on the Hill," in a familiar arrangement, and a hard-rocking and audibled "For You." Bruce dedicates "When the Saints Go Marching In" to the city of Belfast.

"This is sort of a finale for a little while," Bruce tells the crowd during the encore; he closes the show, and the tour, with "We Shall Overcome" ("the song that got us started") and a few final words: "Thank you. We'll be seeing you!"

IN THE CROWD: Local press notes the presence of notable politicians on opposing sides of the deep political and sectarian divide and subsequent peace process in Northern Ireland: Gerry Adams and Gerry Kelly of Sinn Féin, and Ian Paisley Jr. of the Democratic Unionist Party.

MY CITY: To get to see Bruce end the tour back in my home city was a very emotional experience. He said a few nice things about being back again after ten years and how good it was to see the city doing so well. "My City of Ruins" struck a real chord, as it would in any city that has had more than its share of destruction over the years. —*Gary Galbraith*

BACK TO BASICS: When Springsteen sings the very first line, "Well they blew up the chicken man in Philly last night," many of the 10,000 experienced Bruce fans are ready to grow young again, and surely are ready to go "back to basics" with the best performer around. One of the best moments is the excellent "For You," a kind of a combination between the original version (according to Bruce, "written and recorded in 1972 for my very first album when I was 11, I believe, and a very precocious genius") and the Dylanesque (as performed on this tour) "Bobby Jean." "My Oklahoma Home" prompts some kind words from Bruce for Marty Rifkin.

The magic of this tour was experiencing a trip that took you in every musical direction. Like being on the same bus with Asleep at the Wheel, Hank Williams, Cab Calloway, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Little Feat and the Chieftains. How was this possible? As long as you have a driver like Springsteen, anything is possible. What's next, Mr. Bus Driver?

—*Ermanno Labianca*

TOP 6 OF '06

THE BEST SESSIONS TOUR RECORDINGS

NOVEMBER 11, LONDON, ENGLAND: The tour entered the home stretch absolutely smokin', and the two London shows raised the bar tremendously for the filming which was to occur a few days later. Recordings of both London shows sound great, and you can choose between Crystal Cat's and EssexBoy's; the nod goes to the first night if only because it featured the debut of "Long Walk Home."

MAY 12, MILAN, ITALY: Crystal Cat's *Milano Session Night*. One of the best crowds of the entire tour pushed Bruce to one of his best performances. Setlist highlights: the waltz arrangement of "If I Should Fall Behind" and the show-closing "Buffalo Gals."

MAY 21, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN: Three words: Long. Black. Veil. From the Feline.

APRIL 30, NEW ORLEANS: Katrina-ravaged New Orleans needed JazzFest to effect some healing, and with the crowd having a "you've gotta prove it to me" attitude, Bruce did just that. By "Jacob's Ladder," they were eating out of his hand.

JUNE 6, CONCORD, CA: Best non-Crystal Cat audience tape of the tour, which means the best-sounding "Rag Mama Rag" of the tour. And Bruce thought enough of this night's "Bring 'Em Home" to officially release it on the *American Land* edition.

OCTOBER 30, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN: How does Stockholm get their two shows onto a short list? When they sound like Crystal Cat's excellent releases, it's not a hard decision. While the *Live in Dublin* release stole much of the October show's thunder, the high number of Bruce originals and the cool cover of "Love of the Common People" made this one a highlight from the fall leg.

SPECIAL MENTION: The broadcasts—the May 9 St. Luke's show, the 60-minute broadcast from Verona, Italy ("Samson and Delilah"!), and the "18 Nights of Bruce" from America Online—gave us more radio-quality recordings on a single tour than since 1978.

—*Flynn McLean*

That's a wrap! After three nights of filming in Dublin, November 19, 2006.

GEOFF ROBINSON PHOTO

ON COLLECTING

By Fred Mills

Wembley Session First Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Wembley Arena
CITY: London, England
DATE: Nov. 11, 2006
SOUND QUALITY: 9
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9

In contemporary times the term "artistic reinvention" has gradually been rendered meaningless. Industry hypesters and media flacks would have you believe that just because this or that artist is releasing his/her first record in x number of years, or has hired some hotshot producer *du jour*, or decided to fire the band and record at home with a ProTools rig, it marks a bold new direction for said artist. That's not "reinvention," but simply the employment of new working methods. In some instances, *artistic desperation* might even be a more apt description.

If I may be so bold: the second overseas leg of the 2006 Seeger Sessions tour, which started October 1 in Bologna, wrapped November 21 in Belfast, and included two nights at London's Wembley Arena, represented nothing less than an artistic reinvention for Bruce Springsteen. Hints had been there all along throughout the earlier legs, but things really came to a head in Britain and Europe in the fall.

If you didn't go see the Springsteen with the Seeger Sessions Band (and, full disclosure, I didn't), it's your loss. It's an understandable one, for *We Shall Overcome*, though an excellent album, didn't have that same inexorable E Street tug we've come to rely on over the years, and therefore a lot of Springsteen fans apparently decided to sit this tour out.

So here's your chance to recoup.

Both *Wembley Session First Night* and *Wembley Session Second Night* [review follows] offer striking evidence of this extraordinary transformation. Whether by sheer force of the artist's personality or by the backing musicians' confidence and ensemble muscularity that clearly evolved over the course of the tour (both factors, probably), these were no longer just "Seeger Sessions" shows spotlighting the vintage Americana of the album: they were *Bruce Springsteen* shows with a newfound emphasis on radically overhauled Bruce Springsteen songs.

It's there right from the get-go on *First Night*, with show-opener "Blinded by the Light." Recast for fiddle, horns, shout-a-long chorus and a Bruce-goes-Balkan oom-pah beat, the tune is so far removed from its *Greetings from Asbury Park* origins, with lyrics being the sole intersection, as to be a completely different creature. It was always a feisty number, but starry-eyed (and cosmic, natch); here, the singer is positively swaggering, almost punkish and defiant, growling and barking out his lyrics like some streetwise bastard son of Shane MacGowan and the Mekons' Jon Langford.

Likewise with "Atlantic City," which retains certain rhythmic similarities to the original but is in a totally different key and with striking changes in melody and lyric phrasing; and with "Growin' Up," here transformed into an alt-country strum 'n' twang number where the chorus ("ooh... growin' up") is the lone musical thread connecting then and now. The shuffly beat and the harmonica part actually make it sound more like Dylan's "I Want You" than "Growin' Up."

And the Boss hits on *First Night* keep coming: "Devils & Dust"... "Long Time Comin'" (a high point of most nights)... "Open All Night"... "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)"... plus bonus tracks from the November 14 Sheffield concert, "Adam Raised a Cain" and "Youngstown" (Pete Seeger's "Bring 'Em Home" also appears as a bonus cut). With their new—"Seegerized," anyone?—arrangements and the way Springsteen urgently recasts his vocal lines much how Dylan has altered his approach to his classics in recent years, the songs find themselves decisively removed from their original contexts. It's a risky strategy, and not one recommended to all songwriters—could you imagine, say, Neil Young redoing "Rockin' in the Free World" as a polka number?—but here, placed into a different context alongside material culled from the proverbial Great American Songbook, those songs not only make sense, they grow in depth and attain new nuance.

November 11 also brought world premiere of a "work in progress" (Springsteen's words) called "Long Walk Home." Now, of course, we know the song as one of the lush, elegiac highlights of *Magic*, but at Wembley it's a stark number that starts out with just acoustic guitar, Bruce gradually joined by pedal steel, accordion, percussion, and gospel backing vocals. It's also classic Bruce in every sense, with its images of Smalltown U.S.A., its elemental invocation of fires, floods and hurricanes, and its suggestion that something rare and precious is slipping through our collective fingers as the narrator sighs wearily, "It's gonna be a long walk home." And just to make sure that no one in the Wembley audiences misses the metaphors' meanings and the song's allegorical content, Springsteen prefaces the number with comments about all the "destruction done just to basic principles of democracy" back home in America.

Certainly the *We Shall Overcome* material is welcome and worthwhile, too. Setlist mainstays such as "Mrs. McGrath" (with its wonderful Celtic vibe), "Jacob's Ladder" (sanctify us, Brother Bruce!), and of course "Pay Me My Money Down" (riotous and rousing, and a guaranteed separator of asses-from-seats) had only gotten better with each performance on the tour. In fact, they are so strong here that, hindsight being what it is, perhaps Bruce should have toured the material then gone into the studio, not the other way around.

But still, it's altogether likely that you will *never* hear Springsteen perform his originals like this again. Well, at least not until his next reinvention. He's one of just a few artists on the planet who has the chops, the restless temperament, and the bulging back catalog to pull it off.

Wembley Session Second Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Wembley Arena
CITY: London, England
DATE: Nov. 12, 2006
SOUND QUALITY: 9.5
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9.5

You essentially get more of the same for *Second Night*. Quality-wise, it's hard to recommend one disc over the other. *Second Night*, with a slightly "hotter" sound (a bit more presence and low-end definition, perhaps, but those are oftentimes subjective qualities), seems marginally better, but I'd be hard-pressed to say which night's actual performance was stronger. After listening to both sets back-to-back, I can honestly say the adrenalin charge was profound and consistent throughout. Worth noting: November 12 ran a bit longer, so *Second Night* only has one bonus track, "Shenandoah" (from November 18 in Dublin) compared to *First Night*'s three.

Song-wise, *Second Night* offers a quite different, equally fascinating, setlist. From the *Seeger Sessions* proper, "John Henry" stands in for the previous night's "Old Dan Tucker" to get arteries pumping and feet tapping early in the show, while "Man on the Flying Trapeze" subs for "Froggie Went A-Courtin'" as concert-closer. And oh, what Boss treats—all reworked, natch—are heard: "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?" (a tour premiere, its opening lines prompt whoops and cheers of disbelief from the crowd), "Johnny 99" (done up New Orleans style), "Further On (Up The Road)" (cinematic, like

Continued page 113

To wrap up the 2006 Seeger Sessions tour (covered in full in last issue's column), two different compilations were put together that contained every song performed on the tour. The first, a five-disc set from sibarts, is structured as one long show, with the songs sequenced where they would usually appear in the set. Performance and sound were both considered when selecting sources, and listeners will not be disappointed in the choices.

The second compilation, a seven-disc set called *Swing That Thing*, took a slightly different approach to sequencing. The first two discs represent an ideal show, with many of the tour standards included in this part of the set. The next three discs contain the rest of the songs performed over the course of the tour, with each disc sequenced to mirror the flow of a full-length show. Songs from the various tour broadcasts plus Bruce's guest spot with Lucinda Williams from November 10, 2006, comprise disc six, and the final disc contained 13 Bruce originals as "Seeger-fied" on the tour, including the lone new original, "Long Walk Home." As with sibarts' set above, sound quality and performance were the primary factors in selecting sources, which meant a heavy reliance on Crystal Cat releases, with less-than-excellent sources for some songs, such as "The Promised Land."

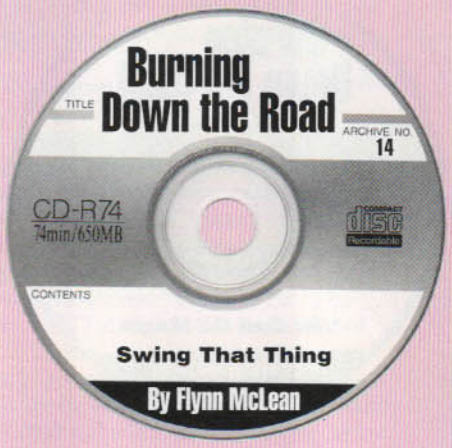
Both of these sets made the inclusion of Bruce's song introductions a priority, and the segues, for the most part, are very smooth. In the interest of completeness, both sets featured the studio version of "Bring 'Em Home" released only on the official brucespringsteen.net website.

A third Seeger Sessions tour compilation, *The Great American Springsteen Folkscare*, was released in three volumes as the tour progressed and enough material was gathered to fill out the discs. While these discs certainly filled a niche by compiling the rare and unusual tracks during the tour, they wound up not featuring the best available recordings of many shows.

On to historical matters, as the "The Über Series" continues—a movement started by a member of several online Springsteen fan forums to draw out material closely held by a select few collectors into general circulation. Thus far, the high points in the campaign have been three soundboards from Asbury Park holiday shows; a pro-shot DVD of the June 29, 1985, show; and some very cool early soundboards, such as a January 1974 show from Boston, a pre-air tape of an in-studio performance from May 1973, and a pre-E Street Band rehearsal session from March 1972.

Another one to add to that list, and probably one of the most unexpected items to come out of the campaign, is a 60-minute disc consisting of nine songs from the December 31, 1975, show in Philadelphia. A complete soundboard of that show has been in circulation for several years now, but these nine songs were recorded professionally on multi-track and then mixed down in early 1976 in anticipation of releasing a live album. This is a must have—basically, another live album from the *Born to Run* tour, with only three songs' worth of crossover with the *Hammersmith '75* release. Actually, four titles are duplicated, but the slow version of "Tenth Avenue Freezeout" from the New Years's Eve show is essentially a different song. In addition to the radically different "Freezeout," you also get three awesome covers from the mid-'70s: "It's My Life," "Pretty Flamingo," and "Mountain of Love." Two Bruce originals, "Night" and "Does This Bus Stop at 57th Street," round out this incredible disc.

We move up a couple decades for the next "must-have" in the Über Series: *The Lost 1993 TV Show*, a DVD and CD release culled from two shows from the latter part of the *Human Touch/Lucky Town* tour. According to the source, Bruce and Co. utilized a full film crew to capture the May 22, 1993, show from Milton Keynes, England, and the May 28, 1993, show from Stockholm, with the intention of airing a composite of a complete show on television. The



video and audio, both totally flawless, back up that claim. The majority of the program is from the Stockholm show, with the Milton Keynes footage filling in here and there, most notably with "Viva Las Vegas" and "Satan's Jeweled Crown." Unfortunately, some transitions from one source to the other are not quite seamless, but that's a minor complaint. Looking at this DVD now, after two solo tours and two E Street Band tours, the highlights are the 1992 material and the two gospel-esque songs, "Many Rivers to Cross" and "Satan's Jeweled Crown," where the backing vocalists were used to the best effect of the entire tour. It's not hard to see a direct link between those two songs and some Seeger Sessions tour arrangements. Obviously, the three more-or-less solo acoustic songs that opened the show foreshadow both the *Ghost of Tom Joad* and *Devils & Dust* tours. The perfect audio and video make this one the defining document of the 1993 tour, a perfect bookend to the uncut *Plugged* show that surfaced a few years ago. The DVD was uploaded in a dual layer disc format, a format not supported by all players and burners, which made it somewhat frustrating for some.

In 2006, the Über Series brought us our first Madison Square Garden 2000 show (June 20) that was recorded via a wireless system and then mixed with an audience source to flesh things out; two more have since come our way. First is the June 15 show, which wasn't among the best of the bunch, but setlist highlights included the three "new" songs ("Further On Up the Road," "American Skin," and "Code of Silence"), "Trapped," "Stand on It," and the "Meeting Across the River" into "Jungleland" combination. The wireless/audience mix of the show is not perfect, as the piano is way too prominent at times (though it works in our favor for "Meeting" and "Jungleland"), and there are times when it sounds jumbled.

The other MSG 2000 show to surface in the wireless/audience mix format was the one that should have been released in its entirety on April 3, 2001, as *Live in New York City*. Yes, the July 1, 2000, show, the last night of the legendary stand and of the entire, triumphant Reunion tour. The sound overall will not compete, obviously, with the official releases, but it does improve tremendously on Crystal Cat's *Legendary Night* and the fan-produced *The Promise Delivered* editions of the show. In terms of how it matches up with similar wireless/audience recordings, it's not as good as the May 8, 2000, Hartford show, but it's not that far behind, either.

Another very cool recording to come out of the Über Series is the late show at Harry's Roadhouse from December 19, 2004. While the early show circulated soon after the performance, it was barely above average at best. With the late show, we get not only an excellent audience recording, we also get a document of Bruce's one and only public performance of "Hava Nagila." Even without the bar mitzvah standard, this show is a very fun listen, as the setlist is basically a career retrospective—from "For You" to "Rendezvous" to "Darlington County" to "All That Heaven Will Allow" to "Further On (Up the Road)"—plus a couple of covers previously heard only at the Rumson Country Day School benefits, "It Takes Two" and "Tell Him," both featuring Patti Scialfa.

An excellent recording from opening night of the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour also made its way out as part of the Über Series. On every Springsteen tour, the early shows usually find Bruce still grappling with how to incorporate the new songs with the older material, and this show is no exception. "Born in the U.S.A." didn't open the show, as it would nearly every night of the tour beginning in mid-July, and there was a healthy showing of *Nebraska* material, with five songs scattered throughout the show. A full-band "No Surrender" also made an appearance. As any Bruce setlist connoisseur will tell you, this was the show at which the video for "Dancing in the Dark" was filmed, resulting in the song being performed twice in a row, only the second time ever that a song has been repeated at a show. In comparison to other recordings from 1984, this is a tad behind the Alpine Valley shows, but not by much.

For pure novelty, one must check out at least one song on the wireless recording from the April 19, 2003, Montreal show. This recording features Little Steven's guitar and little else. So if you ever wanted to know what kind of chord progression Steve was playing during "My Love Will Not Let You Down," this is your chance.

In 2007, for the third time in as many years, Bruce Springsteen hit the road in a totally different format, this time with the E Street Band. And the tapers—although with memory cards replacing tapes, we may need to change that term—were with them. The first show to make waves was the second show in Philadelphia, as Travitz uploaded a version recorded with high-end Schoeps microphones, which made for a very warm-sounding recording, though, oddly enough, lacking on the higher end. This October 6 recording spawned two remasters, from Ev2 and JerseyBoy. Both may have gone too far in correcting the lack of highs, but the Ev2 is the better of the two. The Travitz recording was also the source of Crystal Cat's *Philadelphia Magic Night*, over-processed to the point of harshness.

The October 18 Madison Square Garden show provided us with an embarrassment of riches: four different recordings were posted online within three days, all of which were more than listenable. NYCTaper's version, in particular, captured the energy and feel of the show in tremendous fashion; unfortunately, his recording cut off a couple of minutes into the night's final song, "American Land." A few enterprising souls were able to fill in those missing five minutes from Scoper's or Bakerstuff's recordings.

The second Oakland show, October 26, provided two excellent source recordings, from Coluzzi and Josephine; the latter just barely edges out as the better of the two. Ev2's remaster combines them, but it doesn't sound as natural and live as Josephine's original. Josephine also traveled south, where she got an excellent recording of the first Los Angeles show on October 29.

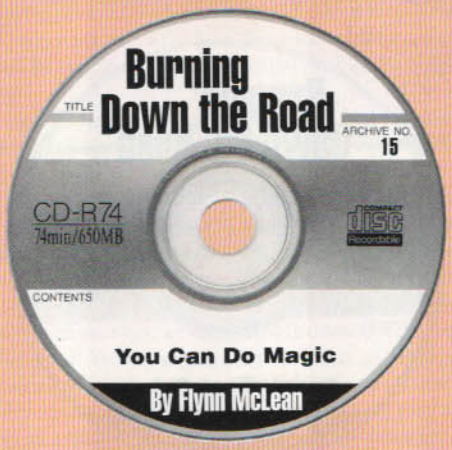
Bakerstuff's excellent Cleveland recording from November 4 was given the ultimate compliment as Crystal Cat used it as their source for *Cleveland Magic Night*, but, unlike their previous Philly release, this one wasn't EQed to death. Bakerstuff should receive a thanks from the Feline!

The November 15 show from Albany was another that brought an abudance of recordings. No fewer than four surfaced from this date, again, all very much listenable. The JEMS version gets the nod as the best of the bunch, with a very warm and very close recording. Bonus tracks on this one are from the November 7 acoustic performance at the Stand Up For Heroes benefit show—the acoustic "Devil's Arcade" is a revelation.

An emotional show in Boston closed out the American leg on November 19, and three different tapers were there to capture it. The cleanest—almost *too* clean—is from Bossman, and Ev2 combined that version with a previously uncirculated recording from JB for a mix that sounds more live. There are times when it sounds too processed, but, fortunately, those times are limited.

While there were several stand-out recordings from the American leg, all 13 European shows were captured in excellent or near-excellent quality. Sevia's excellent recording from Bilboa, Spain on November 26 may be one of the best from the tour, with close sound and an enthusiastic audience that never overpowers the music. That trend continued two nights later in Milan, Italy, where four different recordings surfaced, all of which can easily be considered way above average. It's the SnotRockets version that comes out ahead for this November 28 concert—simply an amazing recording. Crystal Cat's version will have to practically be a soundboard to beat this one out.

Two audience recordings from the December 12 show in Antwerp, Belgium, when mixed together, produced one of the best recordings of the tour so far. The two "raw" recordings—one from PopMarter, the other from SnotRockets—were both excellent on their own, but the combination of the two, mixed almost perfectly by Cooltrane, takes the best from each in the resulting mix.



Ev2's remaster of Musicsaves' already excellent recording of the European tour finale, in London on December 19, improved ever-so-slightly upon the original, and, again, makes it tough for Crystal Cat to surpass.

The 2007 Magic tour also had significant video representation as well. Seven of the first ten regular shows (i.e., non-rehearsal) were videotaped—all by the "New York City Bitch Committee," all with good results. Several of these were later properly authored and dubbed with the best available audio recording. The two Garden shows are the best of this batch.

The St. Paul show, though, provided one of the coolest video souvenirs in recent memory, as someone was able to videotape—with a digital camera, no less—three songs from the second or third row of the pit. Since it's handheld, the picture is a little shaky, but it's more than watchable, and, damn, it's *close*. At one point during "Born to Run," Bruce is practically standing over the cameraman! And you couldn't have selected a better three songs: "Incident," "Thunder Road," and "Born to Run." It may be short, but you won't find a video anywhere that can capture "the pit feeling" better than this one.

When the tour moved across the Atlantic Ocean, though, things really picked up. There were at least four different videographers at the November 28 show in Milan, and multiple releases incorporate various camera combinations. While all are more than watchable, one particular version, *Italian Clothes* from fedeUD, incorporated all four sources (plus various clips posted to YouTube and elsewhere) and then dubbed the whole shebang with Capaldi's audio recording. The editing may get a little frenetic at times, but the sources are mostly steady and the screenshot footage is used judiciously, making for an excellent release overall.

While "only" a single-camera release, the DVD of the December 17 show from Paris is a contender for one of the best of the tour. It's a tripod shoot, courtesy of sordom72, and the first half of the show is the most steady DVD in recent memory (at least after getting settled). However, the second half of the show has more "head interference" than the first, which can be frustrating at times. Tailschao took the footage and dubbed it with audio from Crystal Cat's *Paris Magic Night*, so it looks and sounds great.

The European leg of the 2007 tour also gave us the first two audience-sourced DVDs shot in high definition, from Copenhagen (December 8) and Stockholm (December 10), courtesy of Skipjack and Brucevideos. Unfortunately, high-definition DVD burners are not readily available at the consumer level, so the footage had to be sampled down to standard video, but the clarity in both releases is nearly breathtaking. The Copenhagen show, titled *Fire Down Below*, was shot straight on, getting a good view of the stage for most of the show with minimal obstruction. The Stockholm show, released as *The Hungry and the Hunted*, was shot from the upper level over Roy's shoulder, so it's an interesting angle, one that shows the interaction between Bruce and people in the pit. Unfortunately, both are handheld, so don't expect something as steady as Paris.

With the start of the new tour, the Über Series is taking a hiatus, but three more recordings surfaced just before the sabbatical began. The first two were wireless/audience recordings from the *Rising* tour: Chicago '02, and Atlantic City '03. Ev2 took a wireless recording of the September 25, 2002, Chicago show and combined it with an audience recording, and the results are pretty sweet. There are still some static bursts during a handful of songs, but the rest of it is nearly flawless. Eddie Vedder guested on "My Hometown"; other highlights included "Jackson Cage" and a solo piano performance of "For You."

Crystal Cat's release of the March 7, 2003, show from Atlantic City, NJ, already an excellent recording, was the audience source used to mix with a wireless recording, and whether it was actually improved upon may be in the ear of the beholder. The wireless recording obviously had the keyboards mixed way up, as the sound could be described as "Roy Bittan, Danny Federici, and the rest of the E Street Band." It's quite effective during the solo piano parts; "Jersey Girl," in particular, shines. But when Roy's piano overpowers the rest of the music during "Badlands," it can be quite frustrating.

A partial soundboard from the April 4, 1976, show in East Lansing, MI was the last in the Über Series before the sabbatical. A very good—and complete—audience recording of this one has

been around for a while, and the setlist aficionados will recognize this show as one of two shows to feature every song from the *Born to Run* album. This soundboard, unfortunately, omits two of those, the opening "Night" and "Meeting Across the River," as well as the entire encore. No one will confuse it with the New Year's Eve 1975 recording that surfaced last year, but fans of the first '76 tour (which, by all rights, should be nearly everyone) should certainly check this one out, even if only for "It's My Life" and "Frankie."

Last year, the Über Series gave us the last two Giants Stadium shows in wireless/audience recordings, and a third surfaced as a Christmas present this past holiday season. The July 24, 2003, show was uploaded by a generous soul on Christmas Day, and it was a wonderful gift to receive. In addition to being a great-sounding recording, the show also featured a setlist with many highlights, including "Streets of Fire," "Meeting Across the River" into "Jungleland," and an encore-opening "Sandy."

Going a little further back, an excellent recording of the March 20, 1988, show from Pittsburgh recently hit the various download sites to rave reviews. In fact, this one could be in the top five recordings from the US leg of the *Tunnel of Love* Express Tour. The sound is very up-front, especially the horns, and sharp with an ideal balance of audience and music. And, since it's a Pittsburgh show, Joe Grushecky joins the festivities for "Raise Your Hand." There were no setlist surprises, as there were about four for that entire month, but if you want to hear the standard show from that segment of the tour, this is one to get.

A recent DVD of note from Brucevideos is a two-disc set called *8mm*, collecting nearly three hours worth of footage shot between 1975 and 1981 on 8mm film. The 8mm format was a cartridge-based film that was small and portable, but each cartridge was limited to three minutes and 20 seconds of recording time; to boot, some 8mm cameras in the mid-'70s were still unable to record audio. Thus, most songs on this DVD are incomplete, and some did not have audio with the film. The producers were able to dub audio for some of the silent ones, although with mixed results. When things do come together, it's pretty sweet, and the raw, audience-shot footage captures the young and hungry Springsteen and E Street Band at their passionate peak.

For audio from that period: while the Über Series" has been put on hiatus, another very cool archival series has garned high praise. The "Original Master Series" consists of two-dozen or so shows (and counting) directly from a couple of the original tapers themselves, all from the 1975-to-1978 era. Nearly all of these recordings were already in circulation, but any previous cassette to CDR transfer would most likely have been from a fourth-generation tape or worse, resulting in a significant loss in quality from the original. These recordings were transferred directly from the master cassettes or from a Digital Audio Tape (DAT) copy of the original cassette, making these huge upgrades to what was previously in circulation. Thus far, these releases have focused on the 1975 Roxy, 1976 Palladium, 1976 Red Bank, and 1978 Madison Square Garden stands—not exactly a rogues' gallery in Springsteen history. The Palladium shows, in particular, sound very fresh and bright, just as you'd expect the master to sound, and the Garden 1978 shows are given a whole new life through these recordings.

The one previously uncirculated installment of the "Original Masters" series is from the October 17, 1975, radio broadcast of the Roxy show in Los Angeles. As far as broadcasts go, this show has never really gotten its due because none of the recordings were really broadcast-quality, but this new one should change that. According to the upload, this recording was taken from a DAT copy of the original cassette used to tape it off the radio that night. It sure sounds like it, with excellent stereo separation and instrument separation. This is a vast upgrade over any of the silver disc releases of this show and should be on everyone's list.

"ON COLLECTING" continued from page 110

a cowboy/western film theme), "The River" (in waltz-time, gorgeous and swaying), "Land of Hope and Dreams" (the only Springsteen composition to adhere somewhat closely to its original arrangement, albeit one framed by an acoustic guitar/harmonica motif). As before, each tune gets fresh life breathed into it to become a compelling "new" tune, and this further suggests something that Bruce fans already know: the Great Springsteen Songbook, like that other Songbook mentioned previously, is imbued with a timelessness all its own.

Crystal Cat's usual solid artwork presentation is intact for both *Second Night* and *First Night*, with eight-page booklets crammed with color photos and concert reviews "borrowed" from, ahem, the *Backstreets* website. All in all, the two sets complement one another nicely. Taken as a whole, they make for a superb listening experience as well as a crucial four-disc snapshot of Springsteen in full artistic flight during an unexpectedly vital point in his career.

CLASSIFIEDS

PERSONALS

DREAM BABY DREAM. IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS since I fell in love with you, and the feeling's still as strong as it was that first night we kissed in Portland at the Rose Garden during "Frankie." Love you forever and then some. If I fall behind... you know the rest of the story. It's magic. Love, Randy.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN IS MY FAVORITE MUSICIAN in the whole world. I love Mommy, Daddy, and Emma. Gabriel Peter Morris (age 6).

HEY JIMB: TOO BAD WE CAN'T CELEBRATE AT the R.E.M. show together, but ol' Lorna and I will be raising a glass to you and your 40 years. Happy birthday! Mazel tov! And if that T is supposed to be capitalized, well, next time you can proofread this shiznit. -stAR?

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LETTERS continued from page 5

good, and wanted to start an original band. I asked John over to the house—a band house in Bradley Beach I shared with Walt's Garage Band, who I used to play with—to hear some of my songs.

I played a few of them for him, and he got up in the middle of it, leaving. He said the songs had no structure, and basically sucked.

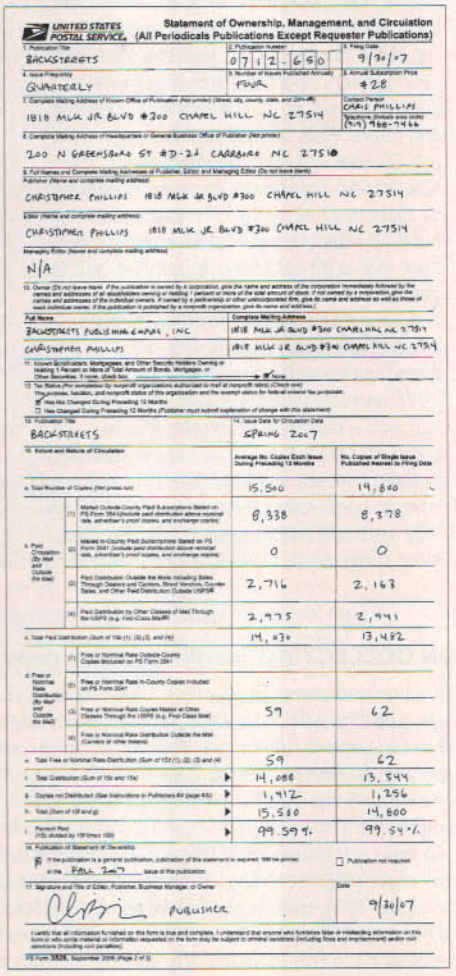
I was pretty well ticked-off, but I started to work harder on writing songs. After a while, I knew he was right.

After that, I had a pretty decent original band in Asbury with Scialfa, Tommy Labella, and a bunch more. We had a good run at the original scene while Lance [Larson] and those guys were playing in Lord Gunner.

I moved to Florida and had an original band with Mars Cowling (bass player from Pat Travers Band) and Paul Harris *(Against the Wind* keyboard player for Seger), then went to Nashville. When rock writers get old, they write country. I had 16 songs published and won a few *Billboard* songwriting awards.

Looking back, having just turned 50, with a stack of kids at home, I see the day that John stormed out of my house, telling me that I suck, as a pivotal moment. I'd really like to thank him, and tell him that I appreciate him. Good luck, John. Hope to see you soon.

Mike Quinton
via e-mail



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PS Form 3526, September 2006 (Page 2 of 3)

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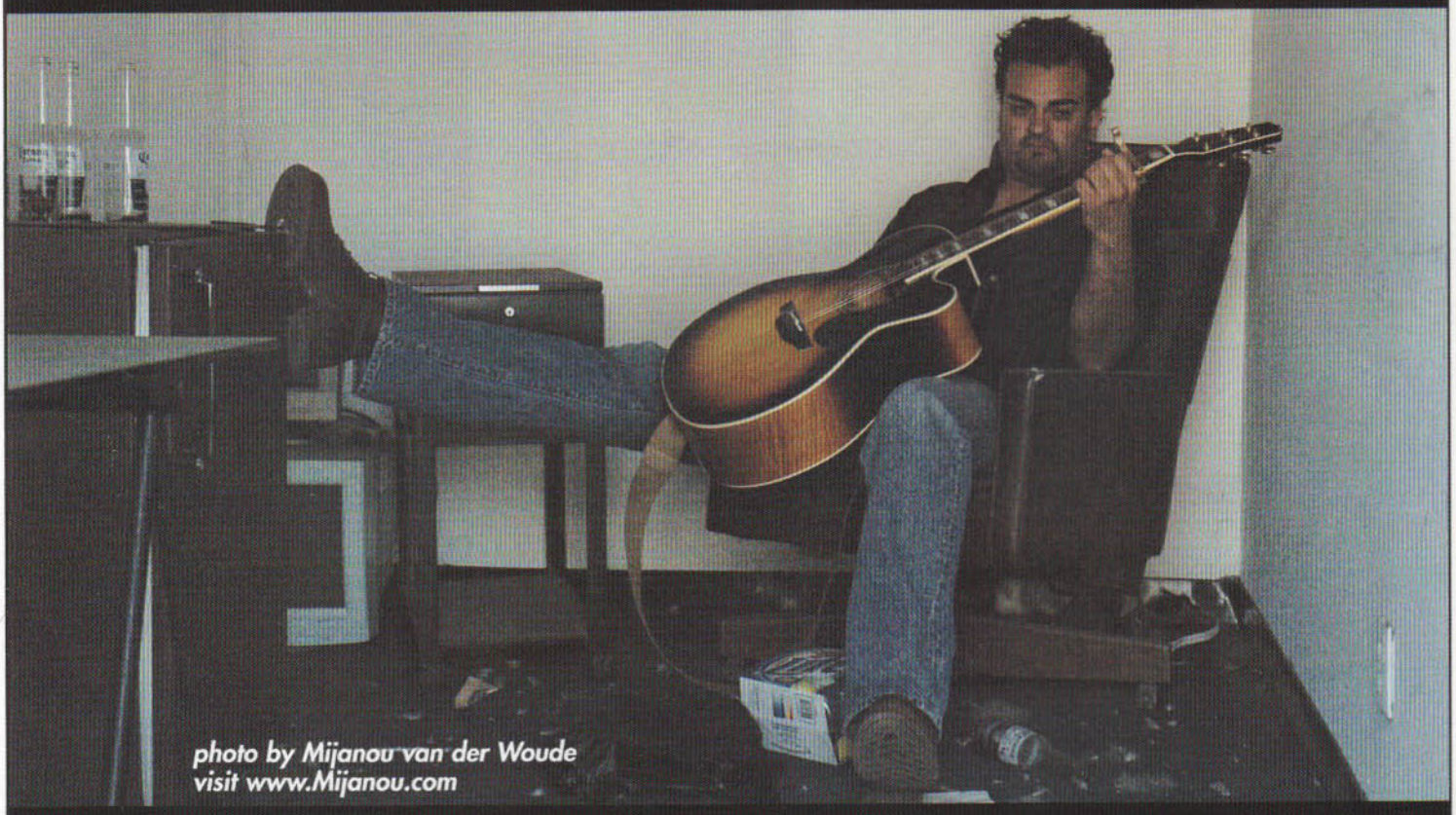

photo by Mijanou van der Woude
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"...I tore into Bruce Springsteen's *"It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City"* and the rest was history."

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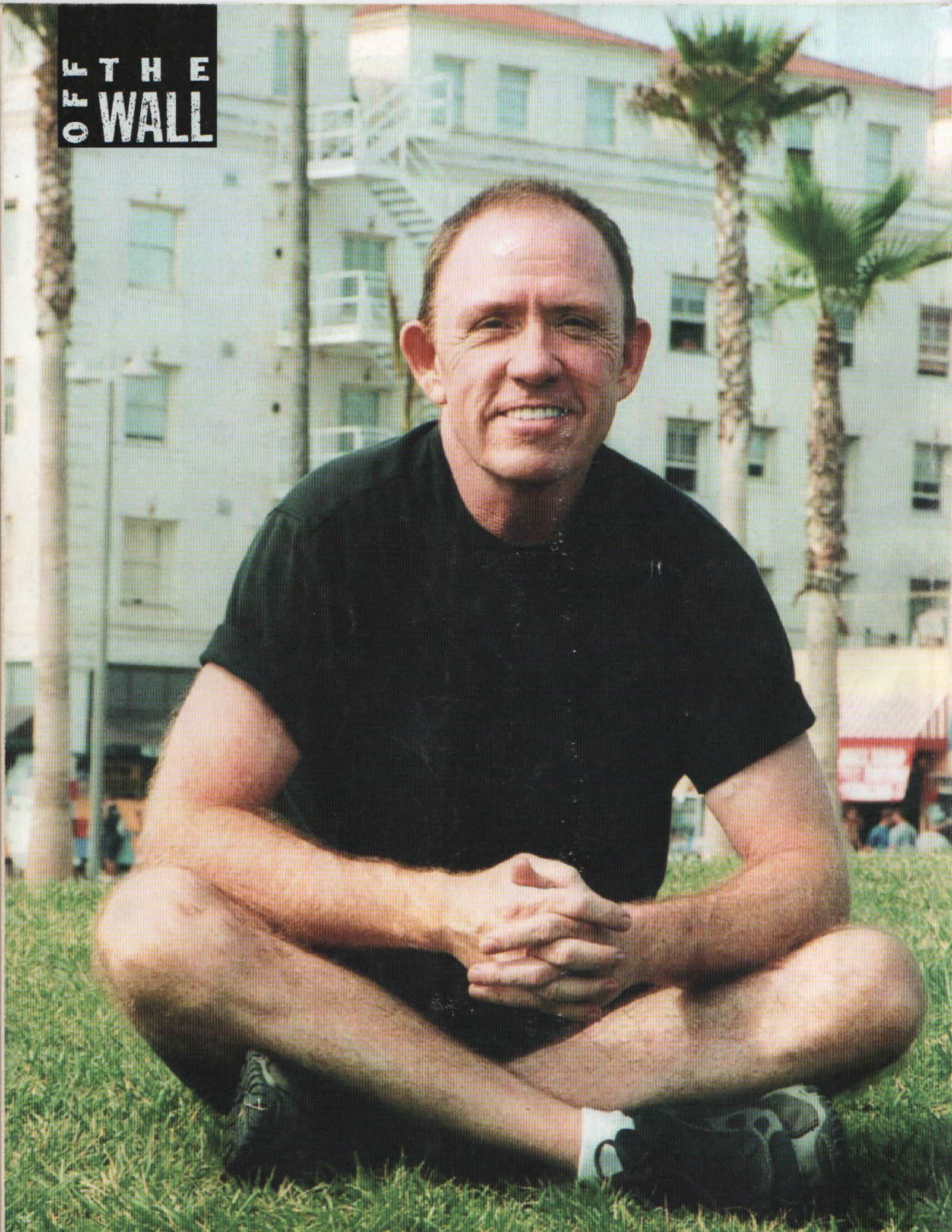
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